

Back Country Horsemen of America

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BCHNWA Trail Stewards

By Rhonda Kelly, Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Arkansas



Jim Center and Mark Varner clear trees at Devil's Den State Park

Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Arkansas (BCHNWA) recently set up regional leaders to schedule work days and have made many accomplishments out on the trails.

Regional leaders for Hobbs State Park are Debbie Ludolph, Marla Walker and Jaccci Perry Ryan. They assisted the “Friends of Hobbs” organization in trail maintenance in order for Hobbs to host a bicycle race. They received a thank you letter from Hobbs, stating that the trails had never looked so good.

Devil's Den State Park allowed Jim Center, regional leader, and Lonnie O'Bryant, president, to use chain saws to remove dead trees that were

blocking hiking trails. Many chapter members helped in tree removal and clearing trails. We are trail stewards of all trails. President Lonnie O'Bryant has become the Arkansas State Chain Saw Coordinator helping all Arkansas Back Country Horsemen chapters get their members chain saw certified - a goal long awaited!

Back Country Horsemen is pleased to announce the first successful completion of chain saw certification class held on October 27-28, 2022, yielding fourteen new certified sawyers - five Class A and nine Class B. District Ranger Allen Smith gave the official stamp of approval when he signed off on the certifications. “We are ready to get to work. We

love the clip and ride,” said BCHNWA President Jim Center.

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From the Chairman's Saddle...

By Mark Himmel, BCHA National Chairman

Dear members,

We are working diligently to bring members more opportunities and education within BCHA. We are happy to announce for the first time BCHA grants specifically for youth projects. During the BCHA national board meeting's auction in 2023, resources were designated to the Youth Committee. This is a great opportunity for chapters and states to get youth involved in the back country. The application process is easy - you can find it [on the web-site](#) or in the monthly updates. Funds are limited, so don't wait to apply. We hope to continue youth grants in the years to come.

Another grant program is sponsored by American Trails, "The Legacy Trails Program.". This grant is in its second year and offers up to \$1.5 million a year for five years. BCHA opened a help desk to assist with completing this grant application due to the in-depth detail requested in their application. If you are interested in this grant opportunity, you can find it here on the American Trails website and you can contact Michelle Wade at michellewade@bcha.org to be directed to a BCHA help desk representative.

[Click here for American Trails Grant Application](#)

BCHA has also been working with the Forest Service on Challenge Cost Share. This type of funding is submitted through the Forest Service, and over the past few years more funding has become available for states, chapters, and individuals. To enter into a Challenge Cost Share agreement, you will need to work with the Forest Service, Forest Recreation or Volunteer Coordinator. In addition, you will also need an EIN number and a SAM registration. BCHA is able to assist you with this process.

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.

Reimbursement in the Challenge Cost Share is for any expense agreed upon with the Forest District or Forest Region and could include chain saw training, first aid/CPR and fuel reimbursement.

Access to radios is another task BCHA is working with the Forest Service to accomplish. Safety is a priority within BCHA, and we are working with the Forest Service to have radios readily available for your state or chapter to utilize. We would like to know if your state or chapter has access to radios through the Forest Service. Please answer a couple questions in this survey. It would be very helpful in determining where we need to have radio disbursements when needed. [Click here for Survey \(only two short questions\)](#)

Sincerely,

Mark



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Tells Creek Camp Tells a Tall Tale

By Lucy Badenhoop (pictures by volunteers)

The high Sierra Nevada mountains around Lake Tahoe only have a few trailheads that allow horse camping and Tells Creek Equestrian Camp is one of them. The camp sits at an elevation of about 6500 feet so the work was delayed this year due to snow on the six-mile access road until mid July. This trailhead and trail system was hard hit by the 2022-23 winter storms.

Three regional volunteer organizations coordinated a four-day work party to clean it up in late July. The Elegant Ears Mule Association organized the effort and invited Back Country Horsemen of California - Mother Lode Unit (BCHC-MLU) and the Georgetown Divide Equestrian Trails Foundation (GDETF) to help, which they did. It's a small camp, but 15 volunteer rigs squeezed into 10 camp sites and arranged some potluck meals.

The prior week, Elegant Ears had cleared trees off the road and the trailer parking spaces, but the general area looked like a lumber camp – down trees and logs everywhere (see picture). Elegant Ears said they would bring in heavy construction equipment to haul the debris away later, but this work party was to open the trails.

The sawyer group split up to work various trails simultaneously. About a half dozen trails were cleared using 220 hours to open about 30 miles of trail and buck over 70 trees off the trails (see picture).

A small group stayed in camp to rake debris from around the fire rings and picnic tables. They also collected loose rocks to repair the trailhead loop road that had foot-deep trenches from the massive snow melt (see picture).

The same three organizations had previously worked together in April to do similar cleanup for the Dru Barner Equestrian Camp and trail system near Georgetown CA (lower elevation). That trailhead was larger with 40 campsites and required about 500 hours of volunteer labor.

In both locations, the Eldorado National Park rangers posted signs advising the public that the camp was “administratively closed”. This ensures the work crews will have ample camping spaces for their volunteers and keeps the public out of the danger zone during the work project with chain saws, pack stock, and heavy construction road equipment. Sadly, some campers ignored the restrictions and camped anyway, thus interfering and making the volunteer job more difficult.



Above: Lumber camp (GDETC)
Below: Trail crew (Elegant Ears)



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Preserving a Cultural Heritage in a Natural Heritage Setting

Written by G. W. Wood

Equestrian trail riding as an American cultural heritage is rarely articulated by either equestrians or managers of lands in which horse trails are embedded.

As a professional ecologist who spent my last 40 years with trail horses and horse trails at the center of my being, I offer glimpses of my experiences and suggestions for preserving a cultural heritage in a natural heritage setting.

170 p., 2022, \$12.95

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2023 Haney Meadows Regional Work Party

By Barb Thomas, Back Country Horsemen of Washington



The Table Mountain Fire in 2012 swept through 65 square miles of forest in the area we know as Haney Meadows or the Ken Wilcox Horse Camp. While the fire spared most of the campground, the trees around the camp were compromised and acres of dead trees lining most of the trails have resulted in years of downed timber and damage.

In 2022, Ed Letcher, at the suggestion of Ken Evans, started plans for a regional work party for 2023. A regional work party for BCHW calls on volunteers across the state to join together for a multi-day camping and work party. The call went out for sawyers, swampers, packers, loppers, cooks and anyone else who would assist in the clearing of trails and the repair of the campgrounds. Approximately 50 volunteers from around the state answered this call and in five days did an amazing amount of work.

Ed's goal for this work party was to log out the most popular loop trails out of camp, clean up the campsites, and repair the fencing around the meadows. The work started a day or two before the official work party, as those volunteers arriving on Wednesday or Thursday found campsites clogged with downed trees and debris. So, out came the chainsaws and the excavator to start the camp

cleanup just so volunteers could find a place to park their rigs.

The official start of the work party was Friday, June 30th. Ed broke the trail crew into teams, each taking a part of the trail system to clear. That first day most volunteers were on foot because the downed trees were right out of camp. In all there were 16 certified sawyers working on the trails at any given time. About six members were certified or re-certified at this work party, thanks to Tony Karniss. Behind the sawyers were the swampers and loppers who cleaned up the trails so that the sawyers could go on to the next tree across the trail. In all, around 15 miles of trails were logged out and cleared.

After feeding the volunteers breakfast and packing their lunches, the kitchen crew, led by Ranae Stevens, planned and prepped the dinner that would be fed to the hungry volunteers. Other camp volunteers replaced or repaired about 400 feet of the fencing around the meadow, repaired or replaced three hitch rails in campsites, kept stock water tanks around camp full, cleaned out manure bins, repaired the solar powered stock water trough, and improved all of the campsites.

With all of the work done by so many volunteers, there are still trails

in this system that were not logged out. There is still work to do and efforts that need to be made to keep the trails and the camp preserved for future users.

Some say it takes a village; we say it takes volunteers of all skill sets who have the heart and give their time to join together for the good of others. On that note we would like to thank the BCH of Washington Tahoma Chapter for the funds to feed volunteers for five days, the USFS for their cooperation and help including all hardware, front load tractor, dump trailer, and the excavator that made our job so much easier. We also thank the cooks who got the coffee started at 6 a.m. and fed the volunteers breakfast, lunch and dinner.

In summary, this project took 2,245 hours that equaled \$94,490.59 in labor value.

This work could not have been done without BCHW chapters supporting our mission statement of keeping our trails open for all users. We would like to recognize the following chapters whose members joined us:

EVC 8 Vol, MSH 5 Vol, TAH 6 Vol, TDC 8 Vol, LCC 2 Vol, WEN 4 Vol, OLY 2 Vol, CCR 3 Vol, GHC 2 Vol, OKA 1 Vol, WVC 5 Vol, IND 2 Vol

Packing Up a Title

The Reedley College Mule Packing Team Wins Big at the Annual Mule Days Celebration in Bishop

By George Takata, Director of Marketing & Communications, Reedley College

It isn't often that a community college competes and wins against teams at the university level, but the Reedley College Mule Packing Team is the exception. The Tigers brought home the team packing championship at the annual Mule Days Celebration in Bishop, winning the hardware over Cal Poly, Fresno State, UC Davis and Modesto Junior College. There was also a combined team made up of students from Reedley College, Fresno State and Cal Poly. The Bulldogs and Mustangs also had two teams apiece, but not even that could stop the Tigers from bringing home the coveted buckle trophies. "What really paid off for our team is that they were very prepared," said first year Head Coach Loni Langdon. "All of the effort they put in really helped refine their skills."

Preparation paid off in the form of how dominant the team was. The Tigers were a minute faster than the other teams. "When we looked back after we crossed the finish line (after the first run), I couldn't believe how far ahead we were," said team member Cole Hansen.

It also helps to have cooperative animals as teammates. "Having the right stock for a competition like this is critical," said Langdon. "We have the best mules in the state for this. They're seasoned, calm under pressure and predictable. Their age and wisdom are huge assets." Maybe mules aren't so stubborn, after all.

"I was so excited to be sporting the same tiger orange shirt worn by this year's World Champion Collegiate Packer team," said teammate Laurel Machoian. "I could feel my school pride growing every time I



saw the orange cross that dusty finish line first. There's no other program I'd rather have represented than our Reedley College team. I look forward to carrying on the packer and mulemanship traditions at Reedley."

Reedley College also won three individual competitions in Bishop: Harley McCorkle (Diamond Hitch), Cole Hansen (Box Hitch) and Jessie Miles (Packing). But the mules aren't used just for competitions; at Reedley College, they're helping develop students for job opportunities on some of the most beautiful lands on earth. "Packers and livestock who can help keep our trails open for recreation to people who visit from around the world is an essential service. It's a dying art," said Langdon, who also

teaches the Mule Packing class on campus. "It makes what we're doing at Reedley College extremely important, and it's amazing to have such strong support from President (Jerry) Buckley to continue this work. Building a bridge between a community college and the National Forest Service is so unique."

When the Tigers return to Bishop next year to defend their title, they'll bring home lasting memories, regardless of the outcome. "It's not necessarily about the winning, but about experiencing an event of this magnitude and the impact it could make on our students," Langdon said. "You never know where this could take them. It's phenomenal."

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Back Country Horsemen celebrate 30 years of service

April 26, 2023 Cody Enterprises

The Shoshone Back Country Horsemen, established in 1993, is celebrating its 30th year of maintaining trails, improving trailheads for stock and providing training for youth and adults in stock-handling skills, “Leave No Trace” practices, and respecting the land.

Chapter members have cleared more than 4,500 miles of trails since the chapter was started — primarily on the Shoshone National Forest, but also on the Bighorn National Forest and BLM lands. Numerous trail rides have also been completed.

Members have also improved more than 15 trailheads for stock use, chapter chair Candy Christian said. The north half of the Shoshone National Forest now has more trailhead stock facilities than any other national forest in the United States. This includes corrals, hitching rails, feed bunks and improved parking areas.

Several founding members of the chapter, including Bob Bessler and Bill Brazleton, are still involved, Christian said.

“Our members have worked tirelessly over three decades to keep trails open and to provide access to the back country on a national forest that has more designated Wilderness than any other in the nation,” Christian said. “We have also done a number of projects on BLM lands.

“Our chapter has taken the lead in protecting our ‘right to ride’ on public lands in Park County, as well as the rest of Wyoming through active participation in various planning processes on national forest and BLM lands. We have made a determined effort to ensure that public lands stay in public hands... We look forward to adding another 30 years of service to stock users on our public lands.”

The chapter meets every third Thursday at 6 p.m. — outside of the summer months — and alternates between the Park County Weed and Pest and Wyoming Game and Fish conference rooms. All meetings are potlucks, and all riders are welcome to attend.



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BCHA's Education Resources

One of BCHA's missions is to educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise use of the American backcountry resources by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage and "Leave No Trace" principles.

The BCHA Education Committee has developed an educational curriculum for educating new leaders and members. It is a matrix of links pointing to online sources of curriculum aimed at providing training to new members and offices.

The education curriculum matrix is currently available only online. The documents and video training materials can help new members and officers to more quickly fill leadership roles and responsibilities.

The education matrix includes a basic BCHA 101, new officer training, and more advanced training topics covered under BCHA 201.

Find all the above resources at <http://www.bcha.org/education/>

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