

2024-2025 Annual Report of the Arkansas Back Country Horsemen

This has been a busy and productive year for Arkansas Back Country Horsemen. Activities included trail maintenance and other volunteer work, interaction with land managers, youth outreach, Chainsaw training, and showcasing BCHA in an inaugural exhibition to display the economic impact of outdoor recreation.

Volunteer Hours Report – Four Chapters volunteered 7795 hours of service contributing \$350,882 value on horse & mule trails and public service projects during the past year. This work included:

- Launching a trail safety and user etiquette campaign including signage for trailheads and campgrounds, social media and outreach to other user groups
- Renovation of two Forest Service kiosks at trailheads (utilizing a BCHA Chapter Support Grant) and installation of mounting block/benches
- Preliminary scouting for new trail routes to be included in a long-distance trail to run across the northern part of the State.
- Two youth training events (utilizing BCH youth grant monies) that provided both an overnight camping with horses and a day ride and cleanup. Both events focused on safety, horse handling and containment, and light on the land principles
- Enhanced interactions with land managers included featuring the District Ranger of the Sylamore District, Ozark NF as a guest speaker at our Annual Meeting; and, welcoming a new NPS Superintendent to the Buffalo National River (who happens to be a horse person). We look forward to many opportunities to work with these and other land managers in the coming year.

Two highlights of the year's work especially stand out.

Chainsaw training – Building on the guidance of BCHA and facilitated by our Regional USFS saw manager, ABCH successfully completed its third sawyer training recently. This brought our total of qualified sawyers to 32 BCH sawyers 5 users from hiker and mountain bike groups. After years of effort to have a single certified sawyer in our group, this effort, supported by BCHA and the USFS has been a tremendous success. The NPS units in the State have recognized our certified sawyers and welcomed their help.

Natural State Day participation – ABCH was the only equine related organization in the State to receive an invitation to exhibit at this inaugural event. It was sponsored by the State Office of Outdoor Recreation and held in the rotunda of the State Capitol. Over forty user groups, State and Federal agencies, and outdoor recreation vendors exhibited their work for the public during the Legislative session to illustrate the economic impact of outdoor recreation to Arkansas. It was an excellent opportunity to showcase our work and interact with other users, lawmakers, and the general public. Many valuable contacts were made. We felt it was a unique opportunity for the equine industry to become recognized for its importance to the State's economy.

The past year has been filled with many opportunities to fulfill the mission of BCHA. Arkansas Back Country Horsemen have worked hard to increase our outreach to young people and other user groups, to increase awareness of equine economic impact, to contribute volunteer work on public lands and to prepare our membership to continue our efforts in the years to come.