

Back Country Horsemen of America Training Strategies Resolution

WHEREAS, our wild areas were protected mainly by their isolation and lack of easy access before the Wilderness Act of 1964. In the Act Congress mandated protection from high levels of intrusion and development so the lands would remain basically unchanged for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations. To accomplish this a large task force of Forest Service personnel, livestock users and hikers, guides, outfitters, and conservationists was formed under the direction of Professor Steve McCool of the University of Montana. This group spent thousands of hours and had many meetings before developing and adopting a new type of management plan called the Limits of Acceptable Change which has also become the foundation of many other plans developed for other areas. One of the first things that was recognized by the group was the fact that, with few exceptions, only a few of the older rangers and packers in the agency had the advantage of having acquired what they designated as necessary "primitive skills" earlier in their careers. The advisory group stressed that the recognition of these "primitive skills" should be a major consideration for hiring, placement, advancement, and awards such as the Silver Axe Award. It was agreed that on-the-ground experience with whatever tools were necessary to do the task efficiently, including livestock, should be in the resume of every supervisor. This is especially important at the district level where some multi-tasking, including teaching, is necessary to train subordinates.

AND WHEREAS, the recognition of what the task force called "crucial knowledge and skills" for the particular position no longer appears to be a prerequisite or consideration for selection for back country jobs.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the government agencies in charge of Wilderness and back country lands be strongly encouraged to use the recommendations of the advisory group which provided many of the parameters and provisions of the current LAC Plan which has proven to be highly successful;

AND, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these agencies be requested to implement training strategies that will ensure that employees obtain proficient livestock handling skills which include packing and back country travel.

Presented by Montana BCH and Adopted by BCHA National Board of Directors, April 28, 2007 at NBM in Prescott AZ