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Dear Back Country Horsemen of America,

I am writing to recommend the Back Country Horsemen of South Carolina (BCHSC) for the Double Diamond Award in recognition of their exceptional service and leadership mitigating damage from Hurricane Helene. Hurricane Helene caused the most widespread damage in years across the Enoree Ranger District. With much to repair and limited recreation staff, the scale of the work needed done could have been overwhelming for our employees. That is where Lisa Ruth, president of the BCHSC, offered the help of her Chapter.

In the aftermath of Helene, trail systems across the Enoree suffered extensive damage, limiting access and creating public safety hazards for visitors. BCHSC stepped forward without hesitation and demonstrated an extraordinary level of commitment and stewardship to our lands. Many of the affected trails could not accommodate equipment due to bridge damage and largescale tread damage. Members of the Chapter offered a unique solution by tackling trail clearing on horseback and on foot. BCHSC dedicated 350 recorded volunteer hours to clearing debris, repairing tread, and restoring trail features to ensure trails were reopened safely.

Highlighting BCHSC's work is the Buncombe Horse Trail, one of the Enoree's damaged trail systems. Members assessed and cleared damage on all 9 trail sections, covering 34.2 miles of distance. As of December 10, 2025, the Buncombe trail system has been cleared of all Hurricane Helene tree damage. Members of the chapter are actively working on further feature repair/replacement, ensuring the trail will continue to be a safe place for recreation.

What sets this chapter apart is not only the physical work they performed, but the professionalism and care with which they approached the task. They coordinated closely with Forest Service personnel to follow sustainable trail maintenance guidelines, prioritizing long term trail health. They ensured volunteers had appropriate certification and that the work they did adhered to all safe practices outlined in Forest Service volunteer job hazard analyses.

BCHSC's work after Hurricane Helene reflects the highest standards of volunteerism and partnership. Their efforts will be noticed by trail users for many years. I would offer my strongest recommendation for BCHSC to receive the Double Diamond Award because of their outstanding contributions to maintaining public lands in the Sumter National Forest.

Sincerely,

CESAR RAMIREZ
District Ranger

