

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

PRESIDENT'S PEN

Well we had a couple of great winter weeks but it's getting to be a bit long>>>.

At our last Board meeting your board decided to offer to pay for at least part of the registration fees for members who would like to attend the State Convention in Hamilton March 21, 22, year 2020 For the last several years our treasury has always paid the registration fees for our 8 voting delegates. We decided to offer \$500, to reimburse registration fees, in addition to the 8 delegates for up to 5 general members who will attend, maximum of \$100 per family.

At our last general meeting January 20th, we had a presentation from Jeff Hermanns, the DNRC Forester. He presented his case for logging and thinning the Fiddler Ridge area, it includes the BLM 160 acres and the 640-acre State School Section that surrounds the Ernie Strum trail. It starts at the County road to Mystic lake and ends near the Crater Lake. He would like our club member's blessing to do this. The loggers would need to construct a haul road up through much of the nearby land area. Addressing the thinning; there would be small groves of cover trees left un-touched through the total of the area.

Along the same chain of thoughts; Three BLM representatives, Dave Lefever, the Billings Field Office manager, Jennifer Alexander, Recreation and Kenneth Reed, Forester. Will be at our February 17th general meeting. Jennifer will discuss the recreation opportunities south of the town of Bearcreek up on the Face of the Mountain, Including the cabin area in the Spires there, and a corral or some holding area for horses. Also, Kenneth Reed will present a film and discuss the logging on the Fiddler Ridge. I believe Dave Lefevre will be there to meet and great and add credence to the presentations. After we absorb all the proposals, we, as individuals or as a group will have a chance to submit our feelings of this project to these two government agencies, they would like to hear input from our members thoughts of the impacts there. Be sure and come to the meeting and get the facts firsthand.

On the history side we probably all have heard that our Equine animals fare better health wise in the winter if they have warm water to drink. Years ago, I bought a floating water tank heater. We had a

BBCH DIRECTORS

•••

President- John Simmons
328-4163
Vice President- Randy
Thomsen
328-7355
Treasurer- John Jenkins
855-0238
Secretary- Nancy Thomsen
328-7355
Director- John Chepulis
322-4823
Director- Bonnie Chepulis
322-4823
Director- Cathy Reck
690-9066
Director- Mary Sybrant
328-9112

STATE DIRECTORS

•••

Director- John Simmons
328-4163
John Jenkins (Alternate)
855-0238

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

•••

John Chepulis
322-4823

metal drinking tank that would ice up. The new heater cured that, but the horses didn't noticeably drink any more than when it was ice water. I discovered that if I took the heater out of the water periodically and away from the tank my horses would come and drink a more normal amount of water as long as it was somewhat warm. The heater supplier told me "sometimes it seems that the floating type heater may give out a tingling feeling in the water. Just keep it in there they will get used to it." My horses never did!

We will have a short business meeting after the presentations.

Don' Holler Whoa in a Bog Hole.

John Simmons

The cost of registration for the BCHMT Convention goes up (\$10) on March 1st – so if you plan on attending, please get your registration in this month.



Everyone Brings Something to the Table.

General Meeting ~ February 17th ~ Fishtail Community Center

Potluck at 6:30, meeting at 7 p.m.

2020 BBCH Dues – are Due!

Individual: \$35 Family: \$45

Business: \$50, which includes your Business Card in the Newsletter

Our Treasurer, John Jenkins, will gladly take your checks at the next General Meeting, or drop your check in the mail: BBCH, PO Box 614, Absarokee, MT 59001



BBCH PO Box 614, Absarokee, MT 59001

FROM THE TREASURER

NOTICE: DUE\$ are DUE

To Continue to Receive Email Correspondence Get Your Dues In by June 1

The BBCH is in the process of "modernizing" its electronic records and communications. This includes updating the website, Facebook page and the membership lists. The treasurer keeps up the membership list.

The membership list I have kept for three years has information on long inactive members, and has old or incorrect physical addresses, phone numbers and email addresses on current members. Some members are not receiving state notifications because we do not have correct contact information. Our meetings are often so busy that when I receive dues payments, I am not always able to get your updated contact information. The Board of Directors has asked me to put this notice out as to how the club will handle this in the future.

Your contact information is used to provide this newsletter and is shared only with the state and national organization, BCHMT and BCHA – with a date of expiration of the membership. BCHA and BCHMT membership lists automatically delete you from their notifications and communications at the expiration date of your membership. In order to keep our electronic communications current and in line with the state and national organizations, this chapter will also delete inactive members from the communications/newsletters as of June 1 each year.

If you want to stay current on our activities/events/meetings get your dues in. AND make sure I get updated and correct contact information. Bring your dues to a meeting or mail it to PO Box 614, Absarokee MT 59001. And please check with me at a meeting to make sure I have your correct contact information.

Happy Trails

John Jenkins

Treasurer BBCH



"If you're not riding...you're missing out."

Please send any submissions for the Newsletter to Robin Morris,
junkerette@msn.com, by the 5th of each month. Thanks!

Have you visited <http://www.bchmt.org/> lately? There is a lot of useful information and the latest Back Country Horsemen of America [newsletter](#) and BCH Montana Decker Dispatch [newsletter](#) are available! The Decker Dispatch has some great articles...several submitted by our own Chapter members! Click on the links and check it out.

BBCH PO Box 614, Absarokee, MT 59001



NEW POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSES
SUMMER 2020

WILDERNESS POLICY AND PACKING

Experience the wilderness, learn new skills
and make friends

our state voted to contribute \$2000 to help cost.



PSCI 360

Wilderness Policy & Packing

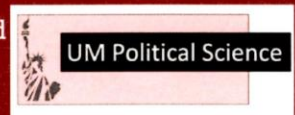
June 8 – June 26 (3 credits)

PSCI 360x

Wilderness Pack Trip

29 June – July 3 (2 credits)

Up for something new this summer? Learn how to pack! Register for these summer courses where you'll learn about wilderness policy and packing, then spend five days in the Bob Marshall Wilderness with other adventurers!



Email eva.maggi@umontana.edu for more info



SUMMER
2020

UNIVERSITY OF
MONTANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
& SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Wilderness Policy and Packing



JUNE 8 – JUNE 26, 2020

3 CREDITS

Make a difference with your next outdoor adventure and learn about Wilderness policy, horse and mule camping and packing in Montana's wild back country. This class mixes campus and barn lectures by Wilderness policy experts with hands-on back country skills. Students will write their own policy papers and work on back country trails. Enrollment is limited to 20 undergraduate students. All majors welcome.



Wilderness Pack Trip

JUNE 29 – JULY 3, 2020

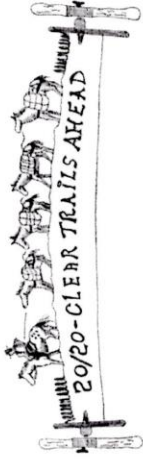
2 CREDITS

Take this five-day pack trip through the Bob Marshall Wilderness and earn credits on horseback. On this professionally outfitted trip, students will meet with Forest Service rangers, build trail, apply leave-no-trace principles with rangers and discuss their policy ideas around the campfire at night. Enrollment is limited to 10 students and successful completion



BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF MONTANA 2020 STATE CONVENTION

Hamilton, Montana March 20-22, 2020
Hosted by Bitter Root BCH



Your BCH Chapter _____

Attendee #1 Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Voting Delegate? _____ Yes _____ No

Position(s) Held, if applicable (i.e., Chapter President, State Director, etc) _____

Not attending Friday's State Board meeting? Join us for a free tour of the historic Daly Mansion, Friday 1-4pm (Limited slots - Sign up now) _____ Yes / No

FULL REGISTRATION

(includes registration packet, Saturday lunch and banquet, Sunday breakfast, coffee/snacks)

Payment made before March 1: \$95

Payment made on/after March 1: \$105

... OR ... **INDIVIDUAL CHOICES**

Saturday lunch: \$20

Saturday banquet: \$40

Sunday breakfast: \$20

Total for Attendee #1 \$ _____

PAYMENT DETAILS:

Total Paid \$ _____

Check # _____

Credit Card (online or by phone) _____

Make check payable to BRBCH. Mail form and payment to: Nancy Pollman, 3777 Eastside Hwy, Stevensville, MT 59870
(Payment by check is preferred, but credit cards also accepted, at www.bchmt.org/bitterroot or by phone with Nancy: 406-546-6492)

REGISTRATION FORMS:

If not submitted in full online, mail or email registration form to Nancy Pollman

GENERAL INFORMATION:

All events take place at Ravalli County Fairgrounds

QUESTIONS? Please contact Nancy Pollman

406-546-6492 npollman20@aol.com
3777 Eastside Hwy, Stevensville, MT 59870

Attendee #2 Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Voting Delegate? _____ Yes _____ No

Position(s) Held, if applicable (i.e., Chapter President, State Director, etc) _____

Not attending Friday's State Board meeting? Join us for a free tour of the historic Daly Mansion, Friday 1-4pm (Limited slots - Sign up now) _____ Yes / No

FULL REGISTRATION

(includes registration packet, Saturday lunch and banquet, Sunday breakfast, coffee/snacks)

Payment made before March 1: \$95

Payment made on/after March 1: \$105

... OR ... **INDIVIDUAL CHOICES**

Saturday lunch: \$20

Saturday banquet: \$40

Sunday breakfast: \$20

Total for Attendee #2 \$ _____

LOGGING: Blocks of rooms are available until Feb. 20 under name MT BCH at:

- HOTELS:**
- Bitterroot River Inn 406-375-2525
 - Quality Inn 406-363-6670
 - Super 8 406-363-2940

- CAMPING:**
- Black Rabbit RV Park (full hookups) 406-363-3744
 - Ravalli County Fairgrounds 406-363-3411
- (Both dry camping and electrical hookups are available on the fairgrounds)



2020 Back Country Horsemen of MT State Convention Raffle Items

3 CHANCES TO WIN!

- TWO 2020 NATIONAL FINALS RODEO TICKETS + \$600 cash for travel expenses to Las Vegas
 - ✓ Taking place December 3rd – 12th, 2020 in Las Vegas, NV
 - ✓ Tickets will be for the last night



- 7 DAY PACK TRIP WITH BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS OUTFITTERS: August 2020, 1 person (value: \$2853)
 - ✓ August 5th – 11th, 2020, 7 days and 6 nights
 - ✓ This trip will not only offer excellent fishing, but the scenery will also be outstanding.
 - ✓ This trip has something for everyone.
 - ✓ For more information:
 - ✓ https://bobmarshallwildernessoutfitters.com/pack_trips/excellent-fishing-and-scenery-tour-2/



- 251 CC 18" BAR STIHL EZ PULL CHAINSAW WITH ALL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (Helmet, safety glasses, hearing protection, & chaps)
 - ✓ Valued @ \$500
 - ✓ What more could you want?



Winner need not be present to win.

Tickets \$5 each or 5 for \$20

Draw Date: March 21, 2020

Hosted by Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen Chapter

www.bchmt.org/bitterroot

- Any questions please contact Christy Schram-Duggan @ 406-360-5947 (text) or email @ synbarranch@msn.com



2020 BCH of MT State Convention Photo Contest



Welcome and Thank you for entering your photo in our annual contest. Following are the contest guidelines. Please note that the convention attendees will decide the winner.

- Register your photo Friday evening or Saturday morning before 9:00 am
- Photo contest will have 5 (five) categories. Members limited to 2 (two) entries in each category.
- Categories
 - 1) **Stock & Wildlife:** Horses, Wildlife, Dogs, Cats, etc.
 - 2) **Montana Landscape:** Scenery, Mountains, Lakes, etc.
 - 3) **Kids Old/Young:** People Young, Old, Not So Old
 - 4) **Back Country Horsemen at Work:** Work Projects, Club Projects, Activities
 - 5) **Laugh Out Loud:** Comical, Funny, Make Ya Giggle

Photos are to be taken by amateur photographers only and must be BCH members. Photo size shall be 5 X 7 or 8 X 10 and must be mounted or matted (no frames, please). Photographer's name and address shall be attached to the back of the photo. Photos may also be mailed to:

Christy Schram-Duggan, 4780 Hoover Lane, Stevensville, MT 59870

The Mules' Strategy

By Sherry Caldwell, Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen, ©1999

I've trained mules for many years,
There's nothing more beautiful to me than those
long ears.

But as it is in so many a profession,
Business is either a feast or famine.
I would say it was in a feast mode,
When a man brought me six to be rode.
He wanted them to lead ride and pack,
With a decent rein, also a good back.

Three were green, one was old,
Two had never been sat on or rode.
The green three had learned some good old mule tricks,
These of course, I was asked to fix.
I put 'em together in my biggest pen,
In the morning I would separate them.
But, for tonight, with tank water and plenty of hay,
I would let them frolic and play.

I go to bed, and am sleeping sound,
When my eyes fly open wide and round.
New mules on my mind, and I'm in fright,
Did I close the gate, is everything all right?
Slowly and quietly I slip out of bed,
Putting each foot on the floor with dread.
No need to wake hubby for this,
I'd just have to explain my neurosis.

I creep outside under the moon of three quarter,
All of a sudden, I stop in short order.
A voice, I hear a voice, well I'll be!
I don't believe my ears or what I see!
Why those dirty rotten mules,
I don't think this is the rules!
It's easy to see they're discussing strategy,
Oh how to get rid of me!

Five feet tall, if at all,
I wonder, can she take a fall?
My legs are long,
And I am strong.
I can jump, kick, back and spin,
All at once, and do it with a grin!
Throw my head down just for fun,
Pile drive her, then I'll run!

Some rank mules that were sent to me.

The guy who trained me, declared a raspy voice,
Had no reasoning, I was never given a choice.
He showed no kindness, taught me fear,
For any small wrong, he'd twist my ear.
Miss Jenny can jump and dive,
The way I no longer can at age twenty-five.
Three ways at once is how a mule should,
When I was young, I used to could.

Well I'm wild and woolly and full of fleas,
Never been curried below the knees.
My eyes are wide in hopes she'll see,
She'd best never throw her saddle on me!
One guy tried, I bucked high and did I beller,
He was a flyin' and a shoutin'; "You bad ass feller!"
I scared him plenty, but he climbed back on.
Ready for more of the same, I reckon.

Now Johns and Jennys, can't you see,
She smelled alright, and spoke to us kindly.
Her touch was gentle, but sure,
I think it's time we all concur.
Let's give her a chance, let her prove,
Whether or not the talk is true.
Will she listen, can she think like a mule?
I'll do my best to follow her rules.

I shook my head in disbelief,
My heart was fallen, yet full of relief.
I saw something tonight all trainers suspect.
When mules or horses get to intersect,
Gossip and ideas pass, plans are hatched,
Strategies and personalities are matched.
Each is different, yet they're all the same,
How can we get this Dad Gum Human trained!!



**BBCH BOARD MINUTES
JANUARY 2, 2020**

Meeting called to order at 7:09 at Simmons home.

In attendance: John Simmons, Randy Thomsen, John Jenkins, Nancy Thomsen, Mary Sybrant

Via Teleconference: John Chepulis and Bonnie Chepulis

December Board Meeting Minutes: Bonnie Chepulis motioned to accept minutes as amended. Seconded Randy Thomsen, motion passed.

Officer Reports:

President, John Simmons: Nine-mile pack clinic- contacted Mark Haskins, Defensive Horseman Certification candidate will need to take one horse for classes. Meyers Creek graveling- Gravel, 5 loads, has been delivered and is placed out of the way of parking. Darryl Holmquist will smooth gravel out as soon as weather permits. BCHMT convention is March 20. Consideration for an application for the Founders Award.

Vice President, Randy Thomsen: A letter of intent was sent to Allie Wood. A letter of support was sent to Dick Walton, Pryor Mountain Coalition.

Treasurer, John Jenkins: Treasurer's report in Minutes. Balance \$24,014.09. License plate income update- John Jenkins has been emailed by the State. A phone number, a letter from Fishtail Community Center, and signed By Laws are needed to complete the process.

Activities, John Chepulis: Organizing for a Spring Clinic. Starting on Work Project Schedule Education, Bonnie Chepulis: Getting organized with Marilyn Simmons.

Issues, John Simmons: Discussion on the use of Monies to hire MCC help with trail clearing. BCHMT- December State Meeting Report, concerns over fund usage at National level. FS had only one Packer last year, but will have 2 in April. Decker Dispatch would like an article from BBCH. John Jenkins will write on ABW packing, and will include pictures.

Appointment of another Board Member: John Jenkins moved to discuss appointment of another Board Member; Mary Sybrant seconded motion passed

Discussion on By Laws section 3.2 and section 3.4

John Chepulis moved to appoint Jim Anderson to the Board. Mary Sybrant seconded; motion passed

John Prinkki donated \$15 to the Chapter.

Board Meeting Minutes: John Chepulis moved Board meeting Minutes to be approved at next Board meeting. Randy Thomsen seconded; motion passed.

Membership can read DRAFT minutes at Chapter meeting.

Agenda could be sent out in Newsletter

General (Chapter) meeting minutes procedure is fine.

New Business

John Chepulis moved to send a resolution to BCHMT, stating all brochures produced by the Chapters in Montana to include the words telling, when and where our BCHMT started. Bonnie Chepulis seconded; motion passed.

Mary Sybrant moved to discuss buying a SPOT for the Chapter. Randy Thomsen seconded Discussion on devices, membership fees, activation, texting, and price. Discussion tabled until more research can be done.

New Member Education Packet- John Simmons would like to include a map of Custer Gallatin National Forest, cost of about \$12. Bonnie Chepulis and Marilyn Simmons agree. Discussion on adding Fun Ride Manners, business cards and trail rules business cards. Updates will be paid for in Budget.

Discussion on the discretion of BBCH president to sign onto letters with or without Board approval. Board would like discussion on contentious issues.

John Chepulis moved to give honorary membership and pay state dues for Mike Penfold and Howard Boggess. Bonnie Chepulis seconded, motioned passed.

John Simmons will send a letter to Jane Darnell Deputy Regional Forester in opposition of the phasing out of the Blasting Program in Region One and the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

John Simmons will write a letter of support to the FS, in reference to the Greater Red Lodge Forest and Habitat Project.

Committee for Spring Clinic- Activities chair John Chepulis would like ideas, Randy Thomsen and John Jenkins will help.

Committee for BCHMT convention display- Randy Thomsen and John Jenkins

Auction item for BCHMT convention- John Jenkins has some ideas.

John Jenkins moved to add \$500 into Budget to pay for, in a divided fashion, State Convention registration fees, for non-delegates, limit one per family. Randy Thomsen seconded; motion passed

John Simmons will ask if Jessy Erickson would like to update website.

Mary Sybrant would like Chapter to purchase green bags used for the packing of ABW individuals. John Chepulis will donate 10 of the green bags he has, to the Chapter.

John Jenkins moved to adjourn meeting at 9:57pm. Randy Thomsen seconded; motion passed

Next Chapter Meeting January 20, 6:30 potluck

Next Board Meeting, February 6, 7pm, Jenkins home

**BBCH GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 20, 2020**

DRAFT

Call to order 7:05

Pledge of Allegiance

Introductions of members attending the meeting

Speaker was Jeff Hermanns from the DNRC, his presentation was on the Fiddler Ridge Restoration Project. The DNRC is looking to clean up the state section that lays next to the BLM land that the Ernie Strum trail runs through. Mr. Hermanns is asking for the Beartooth BCH to write a letter to BLM giving permission for DNRC to create a road on the Ernie Strum trail.

Discussions on road route, road access, cost effectiveness, extent of cooperation of entities involved, fire mitigation, habitat, and possible interference with the Ernie Strum trail.

Minutes from December Meeting were read. John Jenkins moved to approve December meeting Minutes. Seconded Randy Thomsen, motion passed

President's report- John Simmons stated Howard Boggess and Mike Penfold were made honorary members. Jim Anderson was appointed to the Board to make 9 board members.

Vice President's report – Randy Thomsen stated Rebecca Hammargren, Yellowstone Ranger District, Recreation Program Manager, sent an email requesting a support letter for an RPT grant for 2020. Beartooth BCH received a thank you note from Public Land/Water Access Association (PLWA) for our donation.

Treasurer's Report- John Jenkins stated the Balance in checking account is \$23,915.37. Membership dues are still being paid. Marilyn Simmons moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Bob Mensik seconded; motion passed.

Activities – John Chepulis stated Chainsaw Recertification will be on March 28th, more information will be coming. This class is for members already certified.

Chairman asked for ideas for the Spring Clinic this year. Dan Aadland volunteered his home to host for just membership.

Education – Marilyn Simmons is looking for members interested in becoming certified to teach Defensive Horsemen. Member would need to travel to Nine Mile Training center with their own horse for class. Fee is \$150 per person. Chairmen is also looking to send members to Nine Mile Pack Clinic, for either Basic or Advanced class. Basic class must be completed to enroll in Advanced class. Information should be included in Newsletter.

Fun Rides – Cathy Reck is looking for help and suggestions for fun rides in the coming year.

Issues – John Simmons stated the Board voted to add \$500 to the Budget to help pay for additional families/individuals to attend State Convention. Board members are encouraging membership to attend state convention in Hamilton on March 21,22. Raffle tickets can still be purchased from a Board member.

Board Members are researching for the purchase, of a Chapter, emergency satellite GPS messenger.

A website manager is needed to update Beartooth BCH website. Please contact a Board member if you are interested.

A work schedule for this year is still being put together.

Randy Thomsen moved to adjourn meeting at 8:48, Dale Olson seconded, motion passed

Next Board Meeting will be February 6, 7pm at Jenkins home

Next General Meeting will be February 17, 6:30 potluck



Beartooth Back Country Horsemen
Box 614
Absarokee, MT 59001

January 6, 2020

Ken Coffin, District Ranger

C/G National Forest, Beartooth Ranger District

In reference to the Greater Red Lodge Forest and Habitat Management Project; I wanted to comment that I felt that this project was well presented to us, the public, back in the year 2013. I spent a day that summer on your public invited walk-about when the Forest Service staff explained the projects. It was obvious that the District Ranger had compiled a very informed team. I believe anyone with an open mind should have had no problem understanding the Forest Service's mission to attempt to make the forest a safer and better place to live and recreate in. Now after the 7-year delay because of the frivolous lawsuit over Lynx habitat; My vote is once again to proceed with your option to do all you have requested as to the improvement project by thinning and logging. I know your department has skillfully trained personal to make these well-planned decisions.

I have a directive from the Board of Directors of our Beartooth Backcountry Horseman to sign this letter of support on their and my behalf.

Sincerely,

John P Simmons, President

Beartooth Back Country Horseman

PO Box 614

Absarokee, MT, 59001

June 2013

Ms Amy Waring

In reference to the Greater Red Lodge Forest and Habitat Management Project; I wanted to comment that I felt that your project was well presented to us, the public. It was obvious that you had compiled a lot of very informed staff there. I believe anyone with an open mind should have had no problem understanding the Forest Service's mission to attempt to make the forest a safer and better place to live and recreate in.

My vote is to proceed with your option to do all you have requested as to the improvement project by thinning and logging.

I believe it's unfortunate that disgruntled X employees have the legal option of criticizing and suing their former employers. That legal right doesn't necessarily make a protest morally correct. I suppose these critics would tell anyone who would listen that they are some type of a whistle blower.

Maybe some day society will insist that these types of folks must pay their own way if they want to sue someone. If they had to post a bond to implement a frivolous lawsuit the bonding companies would control some of their actions.

I once read a passage that said suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope. I believe character is what we all strive for, and it comes with time. My thoughts are "never give up!"

I spent three terms as a local school board trustee. My main critics were former trustees. I generally was able to limit their time to complain to a short time frame and I insisted they stop and listen to my answer of one question at a time. A quick series of questions from someone is just a ploy to frustrate you. I believe you folks all attempted to answer each question one at a time. Knowledge is trump. If someone told me a detail that seemed relevant, I would ask them to tell where they got the information, so I could read up on it. This helped slow down innuendos and to separate truth from fiction.

I know you folks are well trained to handle the politics of these public forums. I am just rambling because, some folks wonder where the budget moneys go when government agencies spend a large part of their time compiling evidence to defend themselves in these debates and in a court of law.

Take care

John P Simmons

2805 Hwy 78

Absarokee, Mt

January 2020

Jane Darnell: Deputy Regional Forester Region One

I feel the proposal to eliminate the Forest Service's in-house explosives program, is not the correct thing to do, it will not be cost effective and or beneficial to any trails program.

According to the <https://www.fs.fed.us> information web site, the **Forest Service, U.S.** Department of Agriculture, **explosives program** is **one** of the agency's safest programs. In my experience of fifty plus years of visiting and even helping maintain the trails into our local Custer and Galatian forests, I would agree with those words above. I have been there when the local Forest Service Certified explosives rangers have been obliged to use explosives to do their job. I have also many times seen the evidence of work they have done in days preceding. These projects are from removing rock to build a trail, or later clean up from a slide or a rock fall. We have more than once been party to a trail cleaning event when the explosives were used to move dangerous trees from the pathway, even so-called log jams in a fast-moving stream.

One critical safety use of explosives is when an equine has been injured in the back country and needs to be euthanized. The critical event after this happens is when a bear takes possession of not only the carcass but also the trail and the nearby landscape. The dead equine owner is obligated to inform the local Forest Service office, so the current plan is that an explosive trained Ranger is quickly sent out to blow up the dead animal. It is imperative that these large carcasses be blown into small pieces and scattered so they are unrecognizable. A dead horse carcass can attract bears for weeks. The equine usually dies near a public trail. At least dead wildlife will many times be back in the woods away from a public area. A bear will cover a partly consumed carcass with brush and dirt, and then hide nearby to rest and sleep off its meal. They can hang around for several days. The forest service does not get involved with the natural wildlife happening other than to close off an area to the public, if it happens on or near a trail. A dead animal cash is a very un-comfortable situation to ride or hike up on. Backcountry travelers in our Rocky Mountains have serious mishaps every year when people stumble into this situation. I have been there, and more than once, but fortunately I was able to ride or walk past without an incident.

How are we going to hire a contractor to come into the backcountry in a timely manner to take care of one of these situations? If the government did decide to hire contractors to do the various blasting jobs, I am sure that the agencies would require an overseer to be sent along to every job with the blaster. That would never be cost effective. I would imagine due to budget restraints; this proposal would mainly shut down or slow down the maintenance of more trails in our backcountry.

Leave our Explosives rangers alone they spend 4 years getting a license I have confidence that they know what they are doing.

Sincerely,

John Simmons, President
Beartooth Back Country Horsemen
PO Box 614
Absarokee, MT

BBCH PO Box 614, Absarokee, MT 59001

Thank you to these local businesses for their continued support!



Grant Barnard Skiing – Certified Instructor
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Bozeman, MT 59715

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Absarokee, MT 59001
406-328-4159 <http://my.montana.net/draa/>

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