

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen

Trail Tales

President's Pen

June 2023

Hello folks!

We had our first overnight in the backcountry memorial day weekend! It was a weekend of work, stories, good food and friendship! We didn't quite make it up to the meadows, even with a 2nd crew.

There is no June meeting but I hope everyone gets some saddle time! If you are the parade type, we are going to participate in the parades in Absarokee and Fishtail. More info on that further down the newsletter but Sarah Lewis is your contact for that.

We are changing some things up with the reimbursements and record keeping so please use the Google form!

[Work Project Reporting Form](#)

Happy trails and I'll see you soon!

Melissa

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John Chepulis
406-322-4823

Next Meeting:



No June Meeting! Please get out and enjoy some saddle time!

2023 Membership dues:

- Business Membership \$40
- Family Membership \$35
- Individual Membership \$25

Not a member yet? Application available for download [here](#).

2023 – WORK PROJECT/ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

June 17 (Sat) Bad Canyon/Trout Cr (overnight available)

June 24 (Sat) (Fishtail Days) make up date for inclement weather

July 6 – July 11. ABW Pack Support. Meatrack. Pack in Thursday, **July 6** and out Tuesday, **July 11**. Overnight on either end if you want, or stay for a long weekend. Pack support for a trail maintenance crew of about 8-9; gear, food and tools.

July 22-23 Sat-Sun Crazy Mountain clearing. Half Moon Campground to Twin Lakes **Aug 5 (Sat)** Line Lake packout -needs recon

August 18-20 (Fri-Sun), Meyer's Creek. Summer Rendezvous and Campout. Details forthcoming. General meeting Saturday, Aug 19

Sept 9 or 16 (Sat) Stillwater ride? Put up trailhead sign, if open.

OTHER

June 18 (Sun) Father's Day

June 23 Fishtail Days

July 4 (Tue). Red Lodge Independence Day Celebration

July 29-30 (Sat-Sun). Absarokee Days

****Please note any unauthorized trail clearings are not covered under Forest Service insurance****

TRAIL CLEARING

Let's Talk Trail Clearing

The board has decided to outline the details on trail clearing outside of the schedule for anyone representing the Beartooth Back Country Horsemen.

The schedule is set at the beginning of each year and sent to the Forest Service, and we are covered under their insurance during those dates. When trail clearings happen outside of that, we are not covered, as stated at the bottom of this year's schedule.

The board has set up 4 guidelines to follow to ensure you are covered under insurance and for reimbursement:

BBCH PO Box 614, Absarokee, MT 59001

- The member in good standing must let a board member know they are entering the trail on an outlined date and time 48 hours prior to going.
- The entire club must be informed and invited.
- A minimum of 2 members go and clear trail for safety purposes.
- All paperwork must be signed including the volunteer agreement & the pre-trip safety hazard analysis.

**In case you missed it, we are moving our reimbursement procedure to an easy form. Please fill it out, even if you do not want reimbursement, as we send everything into the state and it is submitted to the Forest Service. Every mile and volunteer hour shows the importance of every back country horsemen chapter.

Castle Creek to Breakneck Meadow (almost)

Submitted by: Robin Morris

5/31/2023: In 2014, the USFS secured a right-of-way on the abandoned "Bryant Road and trail" to create non-motorized trail access from Initial Creek Campground to the West Stillwater Trail. The "Bridge Project" was completed between 2016 and 2017, and a bridge was constructed in 2019.

In 2017, the USFS also began exploring the possibility of utilizing more of the Bryant Road and trail to connect the Initial Creek Campground to the Castle Creek Trailhead ("Trail Project"). The Castle Creek Trailhead is accessed from Limestone Road and contains a large parking lot. The USFS concluded that the long ago abandoned accessway (Bryant Road) between the campground and trailhead was in good condition. The proposed Trail Project would consist of 1.5 miles of the existing Bryant roadway and 0.5 miles of new trail constructed on USFS land to circumvent private property. The Trail Project was approved in 2019. The trail is complete, and it is time to maintain and enjoy it!



Over the Memorial Day weekend, seven members of our Back Country Horsemen's Chapter cleared a total of 3.5 miles from the Castle Creek Trailhead to the West Stillwater Trailhead, then



another 2.75 miles towards Breakneck Meadows, where they turned around. They put in a grueling work day, clearing 66 trees – some requiring ropes to drag off the trail. They were tired and needed to return to camp to care for their stock, so more work remained.

Tara and Craig Smith cleared almost to Breakneck Meadow last year – on their own. They wanted to see the job finished. They asked me to join their work crew. With my knee feeling better and semi-caught up on client work, I agreed to help – with the caveat that I might be taking more pictures than contributing to the workload. We met at my place at 7:00 a.m., and the three of us, plus their dog Dex headed to the trailhead. Dex makes every ride memorable. I opted to leave Aghy at home as I knew it would be a long day.

Melissa, our Chapter President, reported the Memorial Weekend crew cut some rather large logs, so I brought my 3 ½ foot crosscut saw and my 12" Silky Saw. We would be cutting in the Wilderness, so chainsaws are not allowed. We finally arrived after a slow 2-hour drive to the trailhead – dodging the deep holes, boulders, and tire-slashing rocks on the last two miles.



After unloading Beau, Noon, and Macky from the trailer, Tara and Craig wasted no time brushing their horses and getting them ready for the day's work, attaching an assortment of "trail tools" to their saddles. Noon carried a longer folding saw and a come-along. We tied my crosscut saw, a Silky Saw, pruners, and a lariat to Macky. Beau lucked out – he carried a Silky saw, wedge, fencing pliers, and WD-40. We all had raincoats, extra gloves, water, and lunch. Craig gave Tara a fresh bouquet of wildflowers before we headed up the trail at 9:30.

We headed up a short hill, coming to the Bryant Road, and passed through a gate to the left. I hopped off to open the gate. If the chain was a little longer, a person could open it without dismounting - it hooks on the last link. We followed the old road for approximately 1.5 miles and veered right onto the newly completed ½ mile trail, joining Castle Creek with the "Bridge Project." It's a fun, gorgeous, three-mile ride to Initial Creek! Tara used her hand pruners to clip tree branches that dared to meet her at face level. This trail has it all – narrow passages above

the river – some would "pucker" we loved it, open spaces, thick forest, routes meandering around boulders, creek crossings, and waterfalls!



We appreciated the tremendous effort it took - behind the scenes and on the ground to grant the public this trail. The water was roaring on the first creek crossing, I was worried about Dex, but he took a "long" jump, made it to a rock then hopped over the remaining short distance. He made it look so easy. I kept looking at the

sky. The forecast called for a 50% chance of rain throughout the afternoon and evening. We cleared a few trees that were across the trail. They were lying on the ground and easy to cross – but Craig won't consider the trail "clear" until there is nothing across it. One of my favorite sections of the trail is after crossing the bridge over the Stillwater River. The forest service blasted several boulders and carved out switchbacks – most likely with several Pulaskis. The design is perfect – it even includes several views of the river and a wide spot to view the waterfall. The steep ascent up the switchbacks was slick from the recent rains. I made a mental note to head back if it started to rain – as this part of the trail would be treacherous.

The thunderous sound of rushing white water filled the air as it cascaded down the falls, rendering communication impossible. By noon, we reached the West Stillwater Trail, and fortunately, the weather was holding up, bringing a sense of relief. As we proceeded, we noticed signs of previous tree clearings but kept our eyes peeled for the notable "big ones" that Melissa had mentioned. Finally, we encountered evidence of the prior crews' work around two miles up the trail. We also saw where they turned back – we decided to carry on. Shortly after that, we discovered our own substantial trees that needed to be cleared. Observing Tara and Craig taking on the task of felling the trees, I reached a point where I could no longer stand by and do nothing. It's not in my nature to be idle. Determined, I dismounted and grabbed my saw—a tool that brings me immense satisfaction and pleasure. I relished using my strength to clear the path and make further progress along the trail. From that point onward, we took turns tackling the trees. Craig jokingly remarked that he wouldn't tell my husband, Frank, who pleaded with me to

"take it easy." I expressed that I had no intention of concealing my involvement. I value honesty and would never lie to Frank, and besides, he knows me too well and knows I wouldn't be content with simply watching the work unfold all day.

We encountered multiple downed trees along the trail, some requiring two cuts to clear. We managed to lift others off the trail, providing us with a great workout. Despite the



As we made our way back, Tara took the lead and set the pace. Our speed ranged between 3.2 to 5 miles per hour, with a few stretches at a swift 8 miles per hour. Since Macky and Noon were gaited horses, and Beau was a quarter-horse mule, we did a lot of trotting. While trotting on flat terrain was manageable, I found it tough on my knees when we headed downhill. The descent also challenged Beau, as his saddle tended to slide forward, exerting pressure on his shoulder and making him irritable. Although Beau wore a crupper, I realized later that I should have taken the time to adjust it before the significant descent near the falls and then readjusted it once the ground leveled out. I resolved to advocate for Beau's comfort next time.



Approaching the creek crossing, I noticed Dex, our canine companion, was leading the way. He jumped into the creek, but the force of the rushing water caused him to roll downstream before he could reach the other side. With great effort, Dex scrambled to the bank and managed to find safety by catching onto a rock about 30 feet downstream. My heart was in my throat as I watched this unfold. Dex shook off the water and wore a smile on his face, seemingly unfazed by the ordeal. Tara and Craig appeared visibly relieved as the incident had transpired in seconds. I was

grateful that I had left Aghy behind on this particular trip. While I usually attach a long line to her harness and guide her across fast-moving water, even with the tether, it would have been dangerous for her. Aghy weighs only 30 pounds and lacks Dex's climbing and leaping abilities.

The rest of our ride back to the trailer passed swiftly. We dismounted at 7:45 after spending nearly 11 hours on the trail. Beau was rewarded with treats upon our return, while Tara and Craig began removing the tack from their horses. Craig gathered two more wildflower bouquets, one for Tara and one for me; what a sweet gesture.

After loading our animals into the trailer, I opened my cooler. I handed Craig an O'Doul's, a non-alcoholic beverage, while Tara and I indulged in real beer to celebrate our accomplishments. It was an extraordinary day combining work and play in the Wilderness. On the drive out, we spotted a cow Elk on the ridge beside the road – we guessed she had a calf tucked somewhere nearby.

I kept part of my promise to Frank; I took pictures – lots of them. So, you won't see me in any of them – but I can assure you – I did a lot of cutting, hauling, and grunting – it was terrific! Without a doubt, Tara and Craig expressed their intention to return as soon as the rain subsides to complete the clearing to Breakneck Meadow.

PARADES!



Aren't horses the best part about any parade?! Well, we happen to have horses and would love to get back into showcasing the club and our work with the community by being in the parades!

If you would like to participate in the Absarokee or Fishtail parades, please reach out to Sarah Lewis at slewis_35@yahoo.com so she can get a head count and communicate about any other details.

Upcoming Parade Opportunities:

Fishtail Family Fun Days – Saturday June 24th

Absarokee Days – Saturday, July 29th

2023 – ANNUAL RENDEZVOUS

Montana BCH Annual Rendezvous June, 23-25, 2023 Monture Ranger Station



~ Rendezvous ~
*To Gather, to Meet Up,
to Reconnect with Old Friends
and to Meet Some New Ones.*

Join us for the Annual Rendezvous of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana at the Monture Guard Station. Bring your horse, mule, family and friends. Ride the trails, share a meal, learn some new things, visit around the campfire and camp over for the weekend.



Tentative Schedule

Thursday: Arrive and Ride on your own

Friday: Ride the trails on your own

2-5 pm Wade Murphy's Horseback clinic

*Limited to 12 riders Friday,
Contact Wade to reserve your space.*

406-431-1717

wadeandlonnie@hotmail.com

No-Host Campfire Gathering

Saturday: Morning on your own

2-4 pm Wade's Groundwork Clinic

4:30 pm - Light On The Land -

Awareness Course by Mack Long

6 pm - Group BBQ & Stories at Campfire

Sunday: Go for a Ride then head home.

Free Camping and Clinics

with

\$10 Catered BBQ- Sat. 6pm

Must purchase by June 17, 2023

Send check for dinner to:

BCHMT Monture Rendezvous

2130 9th St. W. #9

Columbia Falls, MT 59912

More Info. Mission Valley BCH

Scott Kiser-406-260-8398

Mark Potter-406-250-3965



Watch for more details as we get closer to Rendezvous!!!

2023 – YOUTH SUMMER CAMP

2023 YOUTH SUMMER PACKING CAMP

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FOR FULL DETAILS AND TO APPLY, VISIT
bchmt.org/wp/flathead/bchmt-youth-program/



RESOURCES

Life Flight Network

Let's talk about the not so fun part of the backcountry. There are definite risks involved about being away from civilization and being self reliant if anything goes awry. If something bad happens and you are unable to exit on foot or horseback, the only option is via helicopter. It is incredibly expensive but there is some insurance for the just in case instance. Following is the link for informative purposes only.



PLEASE NOTE: This is NOT a sales pitch. This is a non-commissioned link.

<https://member.lifeflight.org/#lp-pom-block-370>

Membership is under \$100 and, according to the website, will cover the flight. There is also additional ground insurance.

Online Defensive Horsemen Information

Website - <https://bchmt.org/wp/education/>

Scroll down towards the middle and you will see Horse Safety

This is good information and a great resource for new members that still need some defensive horsemen prior to doing any work activities this year.



MINUTES – MAY 4, 2023– BBCH BOARD MEETING

Board Meeting, May 4th 2023

In attendance, Bob K., John C., John J., Melissa C.

Meeting called to order at 7:19 pm

No changes to the minutes.

President's Report – Spoke about the paperwork for the work projects again for further clarification for Melissa. Reimbursement came up in regards to the reimbursement will go to the individual or the club from Region 1. John C will find out at national meeting. There was also discussion about the IRS requirement for submitting as income for the individual if paid anything above 14 cents per mile. On the topic of reimbursements, Bob K. suggested a form to have everyone submit their mileage and trail information. John C. brought up the specific things we need on the said form, Melissa will create it and send it out.

VP report – None

Treasurer's report – Audit on schedule for May 12th

Fish and game will be the presenters at the May meeting, possible talk about a pack project as well as the rescheduled Yellowstone Project.

No general meeting for June.

Sarah Lewis will head up the parade organization and the officers agreed it's good to have a public presence.

Issues – The dues will be increasing nationally by \$5, this needs be reflected sooner rather than later so we are not losing money for the 2024 calendar year. All of the resolutions at the national level have failed. At national convention, they spoke about engaging and mentoring new members, this is something we were going to do at the pack clinic.

Discussion closed at 8:39 pm.

JUST FOR FUN



TRAIL OF THE MONTH



Packing into Badger Cabin (photo by Eleanore Eberts)

BADGER CABIN TRAIL

Location: East Glacier Park

Length (roundtrip): 22 miles


Surface: dirt, rocks, shallow river crossings

The trail to Badger Cabin captures just how spectacular and wild the Badger-Two Medicine is. Saddle up at Marias Pass on the southern edge of Glacier National Park, then ride south and cross the shallow South Fork of Two Medicine River over ten times. Crystal clear swimming and fishing holes, meadows bursting with wildflowers, and the chance to spot wildlife like moose, bears, beavers, and even wolves awaits. Hunker down in one of the rich stands of poplar and cottonwood or set up camp in an open meadow to make a gorgeous overnight adventure. [Get more trail details here.](#)

<https://wildmontana.org/2021/12/06/community/six-dont-miss-horseback-riding-trails-in-montana/>

Where are you riding? Feel free to email us your favorite trails and riding spots.

THANK YOU TO THESE LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT!




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