

# Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

## President's Pen

December 2023

We made it a whole year! Outside it feels like August, I can't believe we are headed into Christmas. It's been a crazy year and while I want to relax a bit, I'm thinking of 2024 already and this club's big goals!

Our two new board members are Sarah Lewis and Jon Shamel. Please welcome them and thank them both the next time you see them. Sean kept his seat on the board as his term was up. Dave Heinle also exited the board this year and we are all grateful for his help. We can't do all the things without some support. It takes a lot of planning in the first quarter of the year with a lot of agencies and everything came together very well this year. If you've been wanting to help but didn't think a board position was for you we will be taking names for committee members so sign up your friend or put your name down!

Merry Christmas Everyone!

Melissa



### BBCH DIRECTORS

...

- Melissa Codner, President  
308-390-0465
- Dave Heinle, Vice President  
406-321-4326
- Laura O'Connor, Treasurer  
248-672-9518
- Randy Thomsen, Secretar  
406-328-7355
- Keith Brighton, Director  
406-425-1122
- Bob Knutson, Director  
406-698-0290

### STATE DIRECTORS

...

- Randy Thomsen, Sr. Director  
406-425-0204
- John Jenkins, Jr. Director  
406-855-0238
- Melissa Codner, Alternate  
308-390-0465
- Keith Brighton, Alternate  
406-425-1122

### NATIONAL DIRECTOR

...

- John Chepulis  
406-322-4823

## CHRISTMAS PARTY!



PC: [The Grooms List](#)

**Monday, December 18 at 6:30 pm  
Hannah Hall ~ Fishtail, MT**

We are looking forward to our meal catered by R Heart Catering and the gift exchange!

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### *2023 Membership dues:*

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

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

## 2024 BOARD

Melissa Codner – President

John Jenkins – Vice President

Secretary – Laura O’Connor

Treasurer – Jon Shamel

Bob Knutsen – Board Member

Sean Chepulis – Board Member

Sarah Lewis – Board Member

## PUBLIC LANDS

Take Action!

### Volunteer Drivers Tax Appreciation Act

BCHA needs your help to promote a bill in Congress that would substantially increase the federal tax deduction for volunteer drivers, from the current (1986) rate of 14 cents per mile, to match the standard business mileage rate recognized by the General Services Administration (currently 65.5 cents/mile).

This is particularly important for those BCHA volunteers who are reimbursed by agencies or partners per mile for use of their vehicles and rigs and who may face a tax liability if the IRS code affecting volunteer drivers is not updated as per the bill language.

Please reach out to your US senators today!  
To find contact information for your senators, click [here](#).

BCHA recommends that you call the Washington DC office of both your senators to leave a message with staff regarding this request (or “ask”) of the Senator. When calling, you might choose to use the following script:

- 1) “Hello, I’m a resident of (state) and I’d like to leave the Senator a message regarding a bill that’s important to me, Senate Bill 3020.”
- 2) “My name is (full name) and I’m a volunteer with Back Country Horsemen of (state).”
- 3) “I’m calling to ask the Senator to please cosponsor Senate Bill 3020, the Volunteer Drivers Tax Appreciation Act.”
- 4) “I can be reached at (phone number). Thank you.”

BBCH PO Box 614, Absarokee, MT 59001

That's it. You might choose your own script and to describe why your senator's support for this bill is important. That's up to you.

Sometimes a relatively simple ask such as "Please cosponsor Senate Bill 3020" is all that is needed to get your message across. BCHA would appreciate if you would notify us if, and when, you learn that your senator intends to cosponsor the bill.

Please email [michellewade@bcha.org](mailto:michellewade@bcha.org) with any such important updates.

Current champions and cosponsors of S.3020 are:  
Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), who introduced the bill.  
Senator Ted Budd (R-NC) and Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) who are original cosponsors, and  
Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI).

If these are your senators, please consider calling in order to thank them for their leadership of S.3020.  
Thank you for taking action on behalf of BCHA and its amazing volunteer drivers!

## 2024 NATIONAL BOARD MEETING



## REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!!!

March 24th - 27th, 2024

**Ramkota Hotel & Conference Center**

800 N Poplar - Casper, WY. 82601

**[CONFERENCE REGISTRATION HERE](#)**

**[BOOK HOTEL ROOM ONLINE HERE](#)**

## BCHMT 2024 STATE CONVENTION

**March 8, 2024 @ 8:00 am - March 10, 2024 @ 5:00 pm - \$85**



This event will be held on March 8th through the 10th 2024 at the **Fairmont Hot Springs Resort** sponsored by Mile High & Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen Chapters. We have a fun filled weekend planned for you. In addition to our meetings there will be a photo contest, chapter displays, breakout sessions and vendors for shopping. On Friday evening we'll hold the crosscut saw competition and afterwards enjoy live music & socializing. Saturday evening we'll have our traditional banquet meal and live auction. If you're staying at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort, which has fabulous indoor and outdoor pools, be sure to take some time to relax and enjoy the hot springs.

**RAFFLE TICKETS** were mailed out to chapters early so everyone will have plenty of time to distribute them during the holidays. The tickets make great gifts or stocking stuffers! If you need more-please don't hesitate to contact our chapter presidents or send us an email ([upperclarkforkbch@hotmail.com](mailto:upperclarkforkbch@hotmail.com)).

**MEALS** - The Saturday evening banquet meal is included in the Full Registration cost. If you have a guest with you who is not a delegate or convention attendee, you can purchase the banquet meal(s) separately. All other meals are optional and offered for purchase separately on your registration form. Please note there is a 40-person minimum needed to host these meals, so please sign up for them early. In the event that we do not make the 40-person minimum, we'll refund your money & notify you in advance of any changes so you can make other plans. When you check-in we'll provide you with a list of restaurants in the local area. Butte and Anaconda have some great places to eat as well as the usual fast-food varieties. Fairmont Hot Springs Resort rooms have refrigerators and microwaves.

Fairmont Resort has a café and dining room for individual dining needs. They ask that you make reservations in advance for their dining room so they can be properly staffed to serve you.

**PRESIDENT'S BREAKFAST** - There will be a Chapter president's breakfast meeting on the schedule for Sunday morning. The Fairmont "Mt. Haggin" breakfast buffet will be set up and ready so they can fill their plates at the buffet and move to a separate room for their meeting. Please purchase the meal ticket for that if you do plan to partake in that breakfast buffet when you register.

 [Final-2024-Raffle-Flyer.pdf](#)

 [Final.welcome-letter](#)

## HORSE JOURNALS - "HORSES WITH JOBS-BARGE HORSES"

BY MARGARET EVANS FEBRUARY 1, 2022



*Job Description: A draft horse walking beside a canal on a towpath pulls a flat-bottom tow-boat along the canal.*

In England, the Romans were the first to build canals as irrigation or land drainage waterways. They used mules to haul boats loaded with cargo along those canals and it became a highly effective and economical way to transport goods. A horse towing a boat with a rope from a towpath could pull 50 times as much cargo as it could pull in a wagon on the road.

As the canal system grew, boats and barges were pulled with horses, mules, ponies, and sometimes a pair of donkeys. The transport system was heavily in use during the Industrial Revolution and continued well into the 1960s. Today, horses pull barges as pleasure vehicles for tourists and vacationers.

“We have two horses, Monty and Drummer,” says Charlotte Butler who, with her husband Stephen, owns Kennet Horse Boat Company in Hungerford, England. “Monty is a nine-year-old Shire-Welsh Cob cross and the most experienced horse. Drummer is four years old and a Clydesdale-Cob cross. He’s new to the business. They are both geldings.”



*Passengers enjoy a leisurely boat trip along the Kennet and Avon Canal as they soak up the beauty of the countryside. Photo courtesy of Kennet Horse Boat Company*

The company was established in 1970 and has been run by the Butler family since 1980. Stephen and Charlotte took it over from Stephen’s parents in 2004.

Their horses are broken to harness on a working farm in North Devon before coming to their facility for on-the-job training.

“Trips vary from day to day, but typically horses do a two- to three-hour trip in the morning and one in the afternoon. A typical trip would be three miles (five kilometres). We usually collect the horse from the field approximately two hours before the first trip. They are groomed and fed and the harness is put on. Customers arrive around half an hour before and meet the horse and take pictures. There is at least one lock in every trip so this gives the horses a chance to rest and graze and customers can disembark from the boat whilst the crew do the lock.” A lock is a device used for raising and lowering boats and barges between stretches of water that are at different levels on canals.

“Once the lock is done, passengers get back on and the trip continues,” she says. “There is an option to walk along with the horse and its handler. Another unique feature is lifting the tow rope over other moored craft which sometimes means the crew climbing on the boat to enable them to lift it high enough.”



*The Kennet Valley barge is a wide-beam passenger trip boat, built in 1976 and painted with roses and castles in keeping with the mid-1800s tradition. It is powered solely by the 1 hp towing action of the horse. Photo courtesy of Kennet Horse Boat Company*



Butler said that their horse-drawn barge, *Kennet Valley*, was purpose-built in 1976. It is painted with roses and castles in keeping with the decorative pattern that was highly fashionable in the mid-1800s. It can carry 64 passengers, weighs 19 tons, and measures 67 feet long (20.5 metres) by 10.5 feet wide (3.2 metres). The glass windows drop down to allow passengers to lean out during the ride. It has full weather protection so the show goes on, even when it rains.

Customers are always surprised at how easily the horse can tow a barge.

“Although the boat weighs 19 tons it can be pulled by a single person even when full due to the fact it is on water,” says Butler. “So, with the silent motion of the boat and with the sound of the hooves it is an enjoyable step back in time. Originally, tow paths were private rights-of-way owned by the canal company, but they are now used by walkers and cyclists as well as our horses. In addition, passengers can enjoy all kinds of wildlife seen along the canal.”

For more information, visit [Kennet Horse Boat Company](#).

*Related: Horses with Jobs: Logging Horses*

*Main article photo courtesy of Kennet Horse Boat Company.*

**[ARTICLE TAKEN FROM HORSE JOURNALS](#)**

**M MARK MILLER - "A TALE - HOW TO PACK A MULE - 1874"**

AUGUST 22, 2010



*Early tourists had to brave a roadless wilderness to see the sights of the new Yellowstone National Park. That meant supplies had to be carried by pack animals—often cantankerous mules. One such tourist was the Earl of Dunraven, an Irish noble who first visited the park in 1874. Dunraven was an astute observer and a droll wit. Here's his description of how to pack a mule.*

∞§∞

A man stands on each side of the mule to be operated upon; the saddle, a light wooden frame, is placed on his back and securely girthed. A long rope is looped into proper form and arranged on the saddle. The side packs are then lifted into position on each side of the saddle and tightly fastened. The middle bundle is placed between them—a few spare articles are flung on the top—a tent thrown over all—and the load ready to be secured.

The rope is fixed so the fall is one side and the slack is on the other. Each man places one foot against the animal's ribs. Throwing the whole weight of his body into the effort, each man hauls with all his strength upon the line.

At each jerk, the wretched mule expel an agonized grunt—snaps at the men’s shoulders— and probably gives them a sharp pinch, which necessitates immediate retaliation.

The men haul a while, squeezing the poor creature’s diaphragm most terrible. Smaller and more wasp like grows his waist—and last not another inch of line can be got in, and the rope is made fast.

“Bueno,” cries the muleteer, giving the beast a spank on the behind which starts it off—teetering about on the tips of its toes like a ballet dancer. Having done with one animal, the packers proceed to the next, and so on through the lot.

While you are busy with the others, Numbers One and Two have occupied themselves in tracing mystic circles in and out—among and round and round several short, stumpy, thickly branching firs—and, having diabolical ingenuity they have twisted, tied, and tangled their trail-ropes into inextricable confusion. They are standing there patiently in their knots.

Number Three has been entrusted with the brittle and perishable articles because she is regarded as a steady and reliable animal of a serious turn of mind. She has acquired a stomach ache from the unusual constriction of that organ—and is rolling over and over—flourishing all four legs in the air at once.

You may use language strong enough to split a rock—hot enough to fuse a diamond, without effect. You may curse and swear your “level best”—but it does not do a bit of good. Go on they will, till they kick their packs off. And then they must be caught —the scattered articles gathered together—and the whole operation commenced afresh.

∞§∞

— You can read more about the Earl’s adventures in my book, *Adventures In Yellowstone*.

—Text and illustration from the Earl of Dunraven, *The Great Divide: Travels in the Upper Yellowstone in the Summer of 1874*, London: Chatto and Windus, Picadilly, 1876. pages 139-141.



M. Mark Miller is a fifth-generation Montanan who grew up on a small ranch north of Yellowstone Park. His earliest memories are of his grandmother telling about her trip to the park in 1909 and her father and grandfather's trip there in 1882. Miller has capitalized on his life-long interest in Yellowstone history to assemble anthologies and write fiction and literary non-fiction.

[FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)

## MEETING MINUTES

Board Meeting November 2, 2023

In attendance: Melissa Codner, Randy Thomsen, via Zoom: John Jenkins, Bob Knutson, and John Chepulis.

Called to order at 7:07 pm

President's Report – Haven't had time to research grants yet. John Jenkins has been getting information for the youth education grant. He has sent that information to Sarah Lewis and Randy Thomsen to get the application together. This will go to putting on a clinic for the local 4H horse project kids and include our own club member kids. It will consist of basic safety and information. Along with getting you and your horse ready to trail ride.

Vice President's Report – Nothing at this time

Secretaries Report – Read the meeting minutes from the October meeting.

John Jenkins moved to accept the minutes with corrections. Bob Knutson second. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report – Our account is in the positive. \$1200 deposited from the license plate sales deposited this month. \$2049.39 paid out in October. The treasurer will figure out how much we have spent in Montana to comply with the License plate income this year. We have to spend at least 75% of this income in Montana each year.

Discussion about reimbursement for mileage to the State Board meetings. The federal amount is currently \$0.65 per mile.

John Jenkins moved to increase the reimbursement amount to \$0.65 per mile for club business, education and State Board meetings beginning January 1, 2024. Bob Knutson second. Motion passed.

Discussion about trail clearing and packing projects reimbursements. Decided to readdress at the December meeting.

State Board – Nothing at this time.

John Chepulis has sent in our year end report to the state.

Discussion about Allie Wood (USFS) wanting a copy of all our forms from the projects this year. We will provide them to her to keep her informed of how the trail clearings went. We also need to send them to Region 1 of the Forest Service.

We will set up the in class portion of our certification for cross cut, chainsaw and CPR/First aid in January or February at Hanna Hall. Discussion about keeping Hanna Hall as a meeting place. Possible donation and card from the members for the continued use for meetings and Christmas party.

Discussion about the upcoming election. Sean Chepulis, Sarah Lewis, John Shamel, and Clark Linn have agreed to be on the ballot for the local board. Randy Thomsen has agreed to run for the State Board. Clark Linn has also agreed to run for the State Board Alternate. With the start of a new year we need to also work on getting people involved with the committees, Education, Activities, Membership, Communication, and Issues. We will bring it to the membership at general meetings to sign up to be on a committee.

Discussion about the Christmas party. Set the date of December 18 2023 at 6:30 pm. Got price quote from RHeart for meals. What time frame do we need to notify them with the number of people coming. Menu items available. Gift exchange and set up. Photo collection for a slide show.

Randy Thomsen moved to use R Hear catering for the Christmas party with brisket as the main dish at \$18 per plate. John Jenkins second. Motion passed.

We need to provide an article for the Decker Dispatch by January 5, 2024. John Jenkins or Laura O'Connor will do this.

Discussion about grants available to use for the continuation of the Ernie Strum trail and a parking lot at the trailhead. We will need a person to take the lead on this before we apply for any grants to get a plan in place. Will get with Allie Wood (USFS) about applying for a Legacy grant.

Discussion about our tri fold flier and the need to update it with current information and pictures as the one we have now is dated. Will get this going and set a date for completion in March of 2024. We need to purchase the new "Meeting a horse on the trail" cards as it has been updated.

John Jenkins moved to purchase \$200.00 worth of the new "Meeting a horse on the trail" cards. Bob Knutson second. Motion passed.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45pm

## 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*

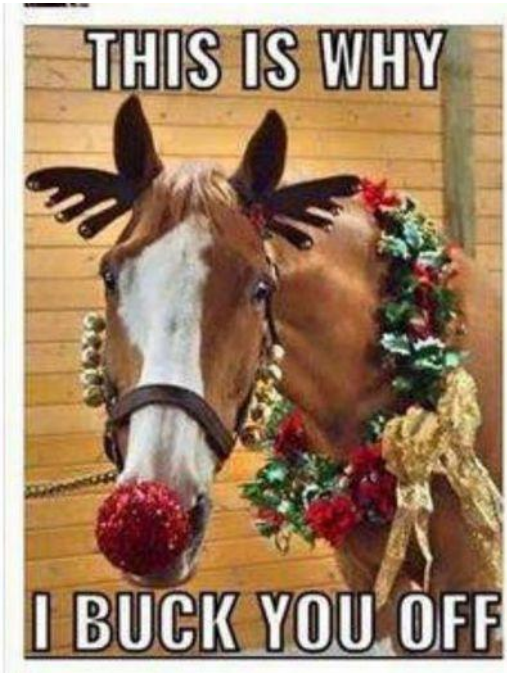
Website - <https://bchmt.org/wp/education/>

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.



**CHRISTMAS JOLLIES**






**THANK YOU TO THESE LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT!**



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