

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

President's Pen

Hello everyone,

It appears Fall has officially come to town. The first snow has fallen on the mountains. The Beartooth Pass is closed for the season. Night temperatures are dropping to near freezing. Don't let this stop you from getting out and enjoying the beautiful fall colors from horseback.

The club has reconvened our monthly meetings in Columbus on the third Monday of each month. These are being held at the Palladium Draughthaus starting at 6:30 pm. We have started a basic packing education at the meetings. Last month we went over mantieing loads. This month we will refresh on using a manty and begin working on hanging and tying hitches. This series will help our members to learn basic packing. This is an interactive education and we encourage everyone to participate and share their own experiences.

As the year winds down our club will hold our elections for board members in November. We need to fill 3 spots on our local board and one spot for our state board. These are 2 year positions. There is also a state board alternate position available which is a one year position. Contact any board member if you are interested.

The Belfry Trailhead project is moving along. The MDOT paperwork for an access easement has been completed. The BLM needs to complete a Sage Grouse impact to make sure this will not negatively impact their habitat. Jennifer Alexander from the BLM, who is leading the project is confident she will be able to clear all the bureaucratic hurdles and have this project started this year. We as a club will need to help with installing fencing around the new parking lot. As the project nears that stage we will reach out to you for help. Next year we will hold a "Grand Opening " of the new parking area to showcase it to the public.

2026 is almost here and with that brings a change to our dues amounts. The BCHMT has raised the dues by \$5 and as such we will be raising our dues to reflect this. The single membership will become \$30, family membership will become \$40.

BBCH DIRECTORS

...

Randy Thomsen President

Sean Chepulis, Vice President

Sarah Lewis, Secretary

John Shamel, Treasurer

Clark Linn, Board Member

Scott Fluor, Board Member

Bill Yager, Board Member

STATE DIRECTORS

...

John Jenkins, Sr. Director
406-855-0238

Randy Thomsen, Jr. Director
406-425-0204

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

...

John Chepulis
406-322-4823

Our Christmas Party is scheduled for December 13 in Fishtail at Hanna Hall. This is a Saturday evening so that it hopefully will be easier for our members to come without interfering with work week. The club has contacted a caterer to completely take care of the evening meal. More information to follow as the day comes closer.

The BCHMT has raised more than \$10,000 for the Forest Service museum in Missoula. This money was raised by the state clubs to help with construction cost. This museum is showcasing the history of the US Forest Service but isn't connected with the USFS. With our donations it has guaranteed that BCHMT has a display area in the museum to tell our story about how we started and the work we do in support of the USFS.

Remember our monthly meeting! Third Monday of the month.

See you on the trails,
Randy Thomsen

NEXT MEETING:



<https://www.budgeslodge.com/elk-hunts>

October 20, 2025

Potluck at 6:30 ♦ Meeting at 7:00!

Palladium Draughthaus
702 E Pike Ave, Columbus

Education: BASIC PACKING SERIES CONTINUES

2025 Membership dues:

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

Please pay your 2025 dues!

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

NOTICE: 2026 DUES INCREASE

- Business Membership \$45
- Family Membership \$40
- Individual Membership \$30

CAMPING WITH HORSES AND MULES

<https://nwhorsesource.com/>

October 8, 2025 by Robert Eversole



Photos by Robert Eversole

Start Planning Now for Next Year's Adventures

The mornings are crisp with frost, and my favorite trails are hidden under a carpet of golden leaves. As I pack away the gear for winter, I can't help but think about next year's adventures. Now's the time to start planning.

Camping with horses might seem overwhelming, with its many moving parts and considerations, but it doesn't have to be. If you break the process down into manageable steps you'll find your way. Like any camping experience, you're planning around three essential needs: food, water, and shelter—for both you and your horse. The complexity of meeting those needs is up to you. You can ease into it by choosing a fully equipped facility or eventually challenge yourself with a more rugged backcountry trip.

Starting small and gradually working your way up is a key strategy for success in horse camping. Each incremental step outside your comfort zone not only leads to growth in your horsemanship and camping skills but also builds a strong foundation for future adventures.

Prepare Your Horse

Regardless of where you choose to camp, being away from home will be a valuable lesson for your horse. It will teach the critter to adapt to new environments, whether that means adjusting to a different routine, getting along with unfamiliar horses, or testing the boundaries of his enclosure. Each trip will give you new insights into your horse's habits when away from the familiar.

You'll also learn the best containment system to keep your mischievous toddler out of trouble. Some horses test portable corral panels, so it may be better to train them to highlines. If your horse will be housed near others, ensure they're compatible. Don't hesitate to move your horse if necessary.

As you learn how to prepare for life on the trail, so is your horse. This mutual learning process is what makes horse camping so rewarding. That's why starting small—right in your own backyard—is a great way to introduce both of you to the process.

Beginning: The Fundamentals

Camp at home. Yes, you read that correctly. For your first horse camping trip, stay home. This familiar environment provides a secure and controlled setting to practice packing for an overnight trip while giving your horse a safe, controlled environment. My first camping trip of every year is in my back pasture. Every year, I'm thankful for the tune-up in a secure environment where failure is an option.

***Pro Tip:** After each trip, keep track of what you needed, what you forgot, and what made the experience smoother. Over time, you'll refine your system and become more efficient in preparing for both the trail and camp.*

Intermediate: Established Campgrounds with Corrals

Once you're comfortable camping at home, it's time to up the ante by traveling to an established equine camping facility, preferably with a corral. You'll sleep in a tent or your trailer's living quarters while your horse stays nearby. This gives you a taste of camping while still eliminating the worry of horse containment overnight—one of the biggest hurdles in horse camping.

Some camps I adore that fit this level include [Oregon's Quinn Meadow](#) and Missouri's [Brushy Creek Lodge and Resort](#). Both offer fabulous amenities while providing safe corrals for your furry kiddos.



Photos by Robert Eversole

Advanced: Established Campgrounds without Corrals

This level moves you slightly further from the comforts of civilization, but you'll still have your vehicle close by, making it easier to manage the necessities. The most significant shift here is securing your horse overnight. Options include using a highline or setting up a portable corral. I'm a fan of highlines for many reasons, but if you're not, portable corrals can also keep your critters out of mischief. Both horse containment methods require you to practice at home first.

Practice setting up and securing your highline at home, ensuring your horse is comfortable and familiar with it before heading out. Here's a [video](#) detailing how to set up a safe and effective highline.

Horse Camps that I'm fond of in this category include Washington's Haney Meadow and Ohio's [Hueston Woods State Park Horse Camp](#).

Pro: Wilderness Camping

Wilderness camping is the ultimate goal in horse camping, the "pro level"—trips in capital W wilderness areas. It requires plenty of preparation and is a true test of your skills and your horse's abilities. At this stage, you rely entirely on what your animals can pack, making it a challenging yet rewarding experience. Wilderness camping also means finding natural food and water sources for your horse(s). Before heading out, research the area beforehand and talk to experienced packers, such as local [Back Country Horsemen](#) groups or park rangers. Notable wilderness areas well worth a visit include Montana's [Bob Marshall Complex](#) and Oregon's [Eagle Cap](#).

Horse camping success depends on gradually building your skills and confidence—both in yourself and your horse. Start simple, stay organized, and embrace each step of the journey. Now is the perfect time to start working towards those bucket list adventures.

For more thoughts on camping with equines, buy a copy of the best-selling book [The ABCs of Trail Riding and Horse Camping](#) on Amazon or visit me at www.TrailMeister.com.

2027 CONVENTION OPPORTUNITIES

WE ARE HOSTING CONVENTION IN 2027!

If you'd like to join the committee for opportunities to serve in the following areas: Communications, Meals, Education, Fundraising, Entertainment, Volunteers, Vendors, Sponsorships, & Decorations. please reach out to Melissa C. via email codner.melissa@gmail.com or text 308-390-0465.



FOR SALE

Canvas wall tent. 16x20x5. Internal aluminum frame. In great shape. \$2,500. More pictures available.

Scott McGinnis 406-322-5817 or 406-321-0316



If you have a saddle or piece of packing equipment, please feel free to email the information to Rochelle at ebenezerequine@gmail.com. The listing will be removed after 3 months unless you request otherwise.

SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Board Meeting September 4th, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 pm at the Stillwater County Chamber of Commerce.

In attendance: Randy Thomsen, Clark Linn, Scott Fluer, Sean Chepulis, Jon Shamel and Bill Yager.

Motion to approve the August board meeting minutes made by Jon Shamel. The motion was seconded by Sean Chepulis. No discussion. Motion carried.

President's Report: Randy reported that Randy Thomsen, Jeff Guckenberger, and Sean Chepulis are certified sawyers and now able to instruct saw classes. Jon Shamel will be sending out reimbursement checks to those who attended.

Vice President's Report: Nothing to report.

Treasurer's Report: Discussion of August report. Motion to approve August report made by Clark Linn. The motion was seconded by Sean Chepulis. Motion carried.

Committee Reports

2027 Convention: Melissa Codner (chair). Nothing to report.

Activities: Sarah Lewis (chair). Christmas Party will be held Saturday, December 13 th , 2025, at Hannah Hall in Fishtail, MT. The party will be fully catered for this year.

Education: Bill Yaegar presented an idea to have a series of hands-on packing demos at the general meetings. This will be a series of how to approach packing. Bill Yager and Sean Chepulis will lead this effort.

Pizza for general meetings was discussed. Clark Linn will take on the task of ordering for the meetings and will coordinate with Sarah Lewis.

Projects: Jon Shamel (chair). Nothing to report.

Communications: Randy Thomsen (chair). Nothing to report.

State Update: Nothing to report.

Unfinished Business:

Belfry Trailhead Update – not much to report at this time.

Scott Fluor presented two letters to the board. First letter was to BLM to request a saddle trained wild horse from the Wyoming Honor Farm in Riverton Wyoming to be used as a fundraiser item for the 2027 convention that BBCH will be hosting. Second letter was a letter of thanks to the BLM Billings Field Office for all their work in helping to get the Belfry Trailhead and the Ernie Strum Projects off the ground and running. Randy to review letter sign and mail.

Elections – Randy and Sean are the election committee. Need members to step up and take on some roles as leaders of our organization.

New Business:

BBCH is in need of a first aid class. Clark will check into a class to be held in Red Lodge.

New Board meeting location discussed maybe in Joliet. Clark will investigate this further.

Defensive horsemanship Class – Can be done online.

Meeting Adjourned 7:49pm.

Next meeting is on October 1st at 6:30pm in Columbus.

SAVE THE DATE!



CHRISTMAS PARTY!

December 13, 2025

Hannah Hall, Fishtail

More information to follow...

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.

THANK YOU TO THESE LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT!



Barnard Skiing - Certified Instructor
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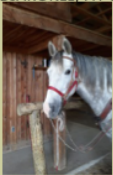
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