

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

President's Pen

Happy New Year,

I hope this finds you all well. I am excited to start off the new year as your new President. I hope to get a chance to ride and get to know all of you this summer. As we begin 2026, we will be planning the spring and summer activities. I hope to see many of you out there.

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend the Christmas party, it was a huge success! Congratulations to Scott Fluor for paying his 2026 dues and winning the bridle set generously donated by Bill Yager. Also, congratulations to Sarah Lewis for earning the Trailblazer award. Sarah is a great asset to our club and is most deserving of this award.

I look forward to seeing all of you at our next general meeting on January 19th at 6:30 pm at the Palladium Draughthaus in Columbus. This month's education portion will be a continuation of our packing clinic. Jeff Guckenberger will be talking about getting to camp and taking care of the animals as a first priority.

As always, I don't need therapy, I just need to go riding.

Sean Chepulis
(406) 581-3904



BBCH DIRECTORS

...

Sean Chepulis, President

Jeff Guckenberger, Vice President

Sarah Lewis, Secretary

Clark Linn, Treasurer

Scott Fluor, Board Member

Bill Yager, Board Member

STATE DIRECTORS

...

John Jenkins, Sr. Director
406-855-0238

Clark Linn, State Director

Jon Shamel, State Alternate

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

...

John Chepulis
406-322-4823

NEXT MEETING:



January 19, 2026

Palladium Draughthaus at 6:30 pm

Pizza Provided

702 E Pike Ave, Columbus

Education: BASIC PACKING SERIES CONTINUES

2026 DUES

Business Membership \$45

Family Membership \$40

Individual Membership \$30

Please pay your 2026 dues!

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

HORSES OR MULES?

Should I Pack Horses or Pack Mules?



<https://www.outfitterssupply.com/blogs/news/should-i-pack-horses-or-pack-mules>

I am asked this question regularly. Coincidentally, the only people who ever ask this question are those who have never owned a mule. That says a lot. However, my standard answer is this: if you own a horse that is just standing around burning hay, pack him. But if you are shopping for a pack animal, buy a pack mule. Why? Remembering that stock users, including me, are opinionated, here are my reasons:

- Pack mules are born followers. A pack mule will follow a horse or another mule almost anywhere.
- While some pack horses have a tendency to daydream and step off the trail, pack mules know exactly where they are going to put down each foot.
- Pack mules carry a load without a lot of swaying and lunging.
- Pound for pound, pack mules are tougher than pack horses.
- I never have to shoe my pack mules. I just keep them trimmed, which saves me money.
- Pack mules know their job and want to do it.
- Pack mules generally have a 20-30% longer useful life than pack horses.
- Pack mules are easier keepers than pack horses for the most part.
- Last, but not least, they are cute.

FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING

The board has scheduled a First Aid/ CPR class for January 24th in Red Lodge at the fire hall. This is a prerequisite for crosscut and chain saw training. It is also a great training to have as you ride the trails. We ask that you are paid up on your dues to sign up for the class.



CPR & First Aid Training Class

2027 CONVENTION OPPORTUNITIES

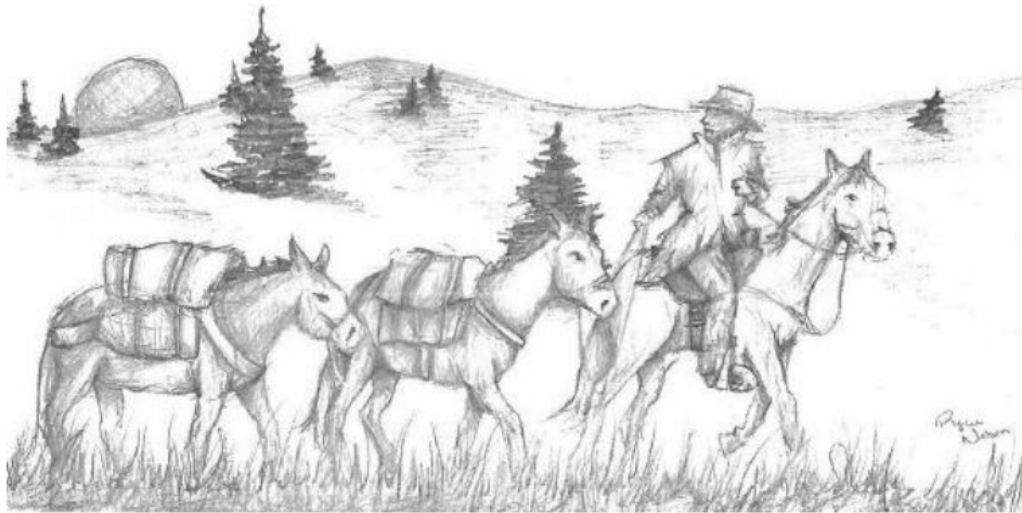
WE ARE HOSTING CONVENTION IN 2027!

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.



BCHMT PACKING BOOKLET

Back Country Horsemen of Montana **PACKING WITH HORSES & MULES**



<https://bchmt.org/wp/spwbch/files/2023/03/Packing-with-Horses-Mules-2.pdf>

FOR SALE

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.

DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Board Meeting December 4th, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm at the Stillwater County Chamber of Commerce.

In attendance: Randy Thomsen, Sean Chepulis, John Jenkins, Clark Linn, Scott Fluer, Bill Yager, Jeff Guckenberger, and Sarah Lewis.

Motion to approve the November board meeting minutes made by Clark Linn. The motion was seconded by Sean Chepulis. No discussion. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve the November Treasurer's Report made by Scott Fluer. The motion was seconded by Bill Yager. No discussion. Motion carried.

President's Report:

Board Elections for 2026

President: Sean Chepulis- by acclamation.

Vice President: Jeff Guckenberger- by majority vote.

Secretary: Sarah Lewis- by acclamation.

Treasurer: Clark Linn by acclamation.

Vice President's Report: Nothing to report.

Committee Reports

2027 Convention: Melissa Codner (chair). The slideshow preview for the 2026 convention is being created by Melissa C. Theme still being discussed. Discussion of what the theme means to the event and how it influences the whole convention. Ideas for speakers and breakout sessions were discussed.

Convention 2026 will be held March 27,28, & 29th in Bozeman, MT. Information, packets, and raffle tickets will be available soon.

Activities: Sarah Lewis (chair). Christmas party update including RSVP list. Member questionnaire was shared by Scott F. This will be available at the Christmas party and online. Discussion about holding year-round meetings to keep members in the habit of attending regularly. Also how to advertise special speakers and events to boost attendance. Discussion of Youth Packing Clinic and need for planning meeting. Sarah will organize planning meeting. Discussion of providing more business updates at the general meeting. Discussion of upcoming First Aid Training to be held in Red Lodge. Clark Linn is heading up this effort.

Education: Sean Chepulis (chair). The ongoing Packing Education series will continue through February. Discussion of teaching how to pack unusual items and camp etiquette.

Projects: Jon Shamel (chair). Belfry Trailhead Project update. BLM will haul gravel needed for the parking lot area. Discussion of logistics, permits, access, and timeline of the project.

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

Unfinished Business:

Jon Shamel and Clark Linn will work together to draft a letter about the dues increase and paying your dues in a timely manner. This will include an updated membership form (updated by Clark Linn).

There will be a "Pay your Dues Today" drawing for a new bridle at the Christmas Party. Discussion of how to gently encourage members to pay dues at the beginning of each calendar year. Discussion of Trailhead Improvements to support next year: Red Lodge Creek (road improvements) & Cottonwood (road improvements, hitching rails, signage, and small trailhead improvements).

Discussion of the access guide for local trails and how to move forward with this.

New Business:

Checking account's signature card needs to be updated for 2026. This will include President (Sean Chepulis), Treasurer (Clark Linn), and Secretary (Sarah Lewis).

Sean Chepulis will report our new board members to BCH Montana State.

The website and newsletter will need to be updated with new board members as well- Sarah will take care of this. Discussion of getting BBCH waivers signed at the general meeting as soon as possible in the year 2026. This will ensure all members are up to date. Clark Linn will head this effort.

Scott Fluer presented a letter to support Congressman Zinke's stance on keeping public lands open to the public. Scott will add some suggested edits and represent to the board before sending.

New location of the BBCH board meetings will be at the Joliet Community Center in Joliet, MT. This will begin with the January 8th board meeting.

State Update: Nothing to report.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

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!

DAN AND EMILY AADLAND
2906 HIGHWAY 78, PO BOX 578
ABSAROOKEE, MT 59001



Phone 406-321-4195
draa@montana.net



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Stillwater Veterinary Clinic

557 North Montana Avenue

Absarokee, MT 59001

406-328-4159

Broken Fiddle Ranch

Dave & Chris Heinle

Clyde Park, MT 59018

(406) 321-4326

brokenfiddleranch@gmail.com



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