

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

President's Pen

Greetings Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen & Women!

Hope everyone had a great Easter Weekend! We are so close to beginning our summer work schedule, pretty exciting! April 22nd is Trout Creek, followed by Island Lake on April 25th. Keep an eye out for emails giving more details for the trips.

Thank you to everyone who was able to make it to the Backcountry Horsemen of Montana State Convention. It was an informative, fun experience. Please try and make it to our next General Meeting on April 20th where we will discuss many of the topics touched on at convention, including the "Roadless Rule" and the "Lincoln Prosperity Proposal". Congratulations to my Dad and long time member of our club! His many contributions to the organization on local, state and national levels earned him the Founders Award presented to him at the convention. Lee Smelzner will be our speaker for education at our next General Meeting.



Looking forward to seeing you all soon!

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

Sean Chepulis
President, Beartooth Backcountry Horsemen

BBCH DIRECTORS

...

Sean Chepulis, President

Jeff Guckenberger, Vice President

Sarah Lewis, Secretary

Clark Linn, Treasurer

Scott Fluer, 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:



April 20, 2026

Palladium Draughthaus at 6:30 pm

702 E Pike Ave, Columbus

Education: Guest Speaker - Lee Smelzner

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](#).

WEBSITE ARCHIVES



shutterstock.com - 240309135

Members!!

We need you to send photos and short descriptions of pack or trail trips (particularly 2023 to 2025) for the archives on the website.

Email: jessi.sparkman@gmail.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.



PUBLIC LAND ISSUES

What is Lincoln Prosperity Proposal?

Let your state directors know your opinion (Linn and Jenkins)

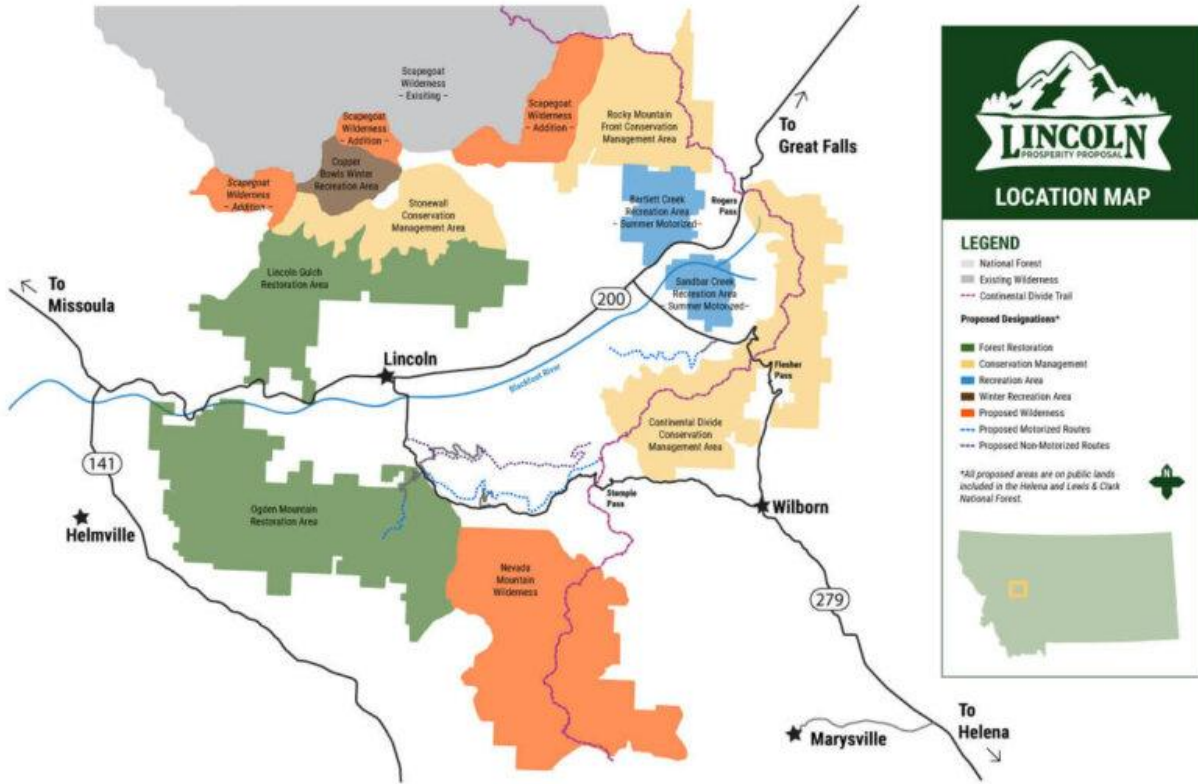
At the next State Board of Directors meeting the BCHMT president will ask the board if the state should write a letter of support for the Lincoln Prosperity Proposal. At the State Convention President Mac Long brought this, but the general consensus was that the chapter members did not know enough about the issue. It was requested that this be brought to the chapters for discussion. The new incoming chair Sandy Himmel will write a letter of support if there is consensus among the state directors at the May meeting.

I thought about doing this quick and easy with AI. I am not a fan of AI, and its use for writing is anathema to someone who has published numerous peer reviewed scientific articles. I gave it a try. But in the end discarded all of it. It was basically one sourced with none of the history of the proposal. So, here's my summary. I recommend some websites at the end that you can access how the land use changes with the proposal.

So why put this in a BBCH newsletter? This affects land use halfway across Montana. This proposal is instructive since it highlights the usual and typical tug of war BCH/conservationists/public land users have with other interests, which are Ag/logging/mining/motorized users. And perhaps also illustrative in that more balanced solutions are possible than what has been the standard conservationist mating call over the years "Don't touch anything or change anything!" But in a compromise proposal no one gets everything they want. Also, importantly, as with the Crazies land swap, new interests are cutting into traditional conservation interests. By that I mean such things as new mountain bike trails being developed and snow mobile and other motorized interests are expanding.

AKA – "River Runs Through It" Proposal

The Lincoln Prosperity Proposal is a proposal for land management including development on roughly 200k acres of NF land (some wilderness) surrounding Lincoln, Montana. The River Runs Through It proposal is a similar overlapping forest management proposal.



From <https://wildmontana.org/our-work/lincoln-prosperity-proposal/>

also see <https://www.lincolnprosperity.com/maps>

What does a letter of support mean?

If BCHMT writes a letter of support, its name is listed among supporters of the proposal -which are listed on the proposal’s website. This proposal would at some point be presented to members of the Montana delegation to the US House and Senate in order to garner support for modification of the current status of public lands near Lincoln, MT. The intention would be to demonstrate that there is a varied group of interests - conservationists, ranchers and farmers, and recreational users - that support the proposal. Hopefully this would convince legislators to sponsor the proposal as legislation. The proposal is intended to be a compromise between the needs of recreational users and conservationists and industry users (ranchers, farmers, mining, etc.).

What is the history of the proposal?

BCHMT previously wrote a letter of support for the Blackfoot-Clearwater Stewardship Proposal. This would have added additional protected wilderness land around Lolo NF. That proposal was added to a bill in 2021 but did not pass out of a senate committee. I think this was due to differing opinions of Montana senators on the balance between industry use vs recreational use. The Stewardship act did not

attempt to balance as many competing interests as this proposal does. The purpose of this proposal is to unite those in the Lincoln area with differing interests and present it to Montana's legislative delegation. The delegation would then add this to a bill, hopefully to be passed into law.

What are the issues?

Economic development VS motorized use VS Conservation VS recreational use (hunting, fishing, etc.) in the areas of concern near Lincoln and the Lolo NF. Industry would include agriculture, outfitters, logging non-wilderness lands which will require a road system. Continue available grazing and agricultural leases. Mining would be excluded in a large area in this proposal. Addition of wilderness for habitat (lynx, bear, etc.). There will be some designated snowmobiling and mountain biking areas carved out of areas where not currently permitted. This proposal is meant to "fairly" balance numerous competing interests. So, no one gets everything they want. But everyone gets something. Details can be read at the proposal's website.

Criticisms: It could limit future economic opportunities tied to resource extraction because it limits mining, road-building, and energy development in large areas. This might reduce future income and jobs. Short term economic prospects but not necessarily long-term ones or long-term flexibility is addressed.

Not all land users (conservation, recreation, motorized, etc.) feel equally represented. The Blackfoot and its amazing fishing would generally be protected.

If implemented, i.e., if passed into law, how would it be managed or governed? This would have to be coordinated through the USFS. It would have to pass environmental regulations. This proposal could be modified along the way and eventually not be as balanced as it currently is intended to be – due to politics, subsequent compromises, etc.

Summary

Conservationists/recreationists shot the moon with the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act which was primarily conservation oriented. It went nowhere. Basically, because not enough attention was given to economic development in and around the area of Lincoln – logging, motorized use, etc. This current proposal is meant to be balanced. In the words of Mac Long, if he permits the quote "It's not everything we would want, but it's the best we can probably do." For further reading look at the Wild Montana website and the Lincoln Prosperity Proposal websites. They have very clear maps of how the land use is recommended to change.

John Jenkins

MARCH BCHMT STATE DIRECTOR'S MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Volunteer work report from John Chepulis: BCHMT cleared 687 miles of trails in 2025.

REMEMBER TO DO THE 301B's for each project. This covers us for injuries through federal workers compensation. Forms must be submitted to Sandy Himmel after each project is completed. Do not wait to send them.

Membership: BCHMT down 10% in 2026 compared to 2025. Recommended that state treasurers update frequently, which BBCH is doing. Thanks Clark! BBCH is now the 3rd largest chapter at 70 members now. We were consistently ranked 6th in the past.

National Directors reports: Discussed resolutions to be brought to the annual BCHA meeting in Kansas City in April. One will deal with BCHA developing an ad hoc sort of membership – NOT affiliated with any chapter. This is a revision of a resolution made about 4-5 years ago which was not passed at the national level. The consensus of the delegates was that the directors should vote against this resolution because it detracts from the grass roots foundation of the BCHA, and potentially removes accountability of the national organization away from the states/chapters. There is a resolution to change how and when the BCHA Legacy funds will be spent. There will be a BCHA nondiscrimination/harassment policy discussed and likely adopted. BCHA will likely recommend chapters adopt it or some other non-discrimination policy for legal protection. USFS Saw program has been restructured, condensed and modified - information is on the BCHA website. There may be an upside to the current government/public lands management amid turmoil in that barriers to volunteer orgs getting anything done may be eased.

Treasurer's report: Youth program is doing well and running a surplus. The BCHMT is doing well and has plenty of reserves in the bank. The BCH of America is running a budget shortfall. The dues increase did not solve the issue.

Public Land Issues: Lincoln Prosperity Proposal/ overlap with A River Runs Through It land use proposal around Lincoln, MT. See elsewhere this newsletter for a discussion. Holland lake provides packing, riding and hiking access to public lands. The historic Inn there was sold to developers and there has been a concern for development that would exclude public land access/use. This has been on hold for 3 years due to septic concerns for the lodge if it were developed. No change at this time. Potential roadless rule changes on public lands are unclear at this time.

Education committee: Kathy Hundley visited the A-B Clydesdale Stables in Missouri and had a wonderful and informative presentation, which she repeated at the general convention.

Other: All chapters doing well but one is struggling to meet minimum state requirements.

Finally, at the post- convention meeting a budget was passed. The state will be operating with approximately a \$5k deficit in 2026, but has savings adequate to cover this. New state officers were

elected. President Sandy Himmel. VP Chris Nygren. Treasurer- Kathy Hundley. Secretary will be appointed by Sandy Himmel. The new national director will be Mark Himmel. Alternate director, John Chepulis, BBCH. The state convention raised \$4005 in the live auction, \$649 in the 50/50 and \$3900 for the youth programs for the BCHMT. The silent auction raised \$3690 for the Gallatin Valley Chapter.

John Jenkins and Clark Linn

SAVE THE DATE(S)

~~March 14: Tack Sale - Columbus, MT~~

April 12: Member clinic

June 27: Fishtail Family Fun Days

This is just the beginning... more to come!

TRAIL CLEARING

April 2026

22: Trout Creek

25: Island Lake Trail and the East/West Fork trails (these are chainsaw trails)

22 or 29: Jim Gulch Deer creek?

**May have to move one to May 6 Wednesday

May 2026

2/3: Lodgepole (intersection Lower Deer Creek)

9-10: Main Stillwater

13 (Wednesday): Ernie Strum Trail

16-17: Catch up weekend

23-24-25: West Fork of Stillwater (camping weekend)

**This will include Castle Creek Trail

Allie also asked if we would be interested in doing Rabbit Gulch (8 miles) - part is chain saw, last part is wilderness.

FOR SALE

Coming 2 year old filly for sale

For sale is a 2024 coming 2 year old registered quarter horse filly. High Rolling Roany, Mr Pete Oswald, Apple Jax on her papers. Registered name is Awesome Copper Jet. Located in Laurel, MT

Blossom is halter broke, leads, ties, and picks up and holds her feet. She stands for her feet to be trimmed well. She has been ponied. She loads and unloads in the trailer well, and does best with a buddy horse since she's a baby. She has that High Rolling Roany calm demeanor that everyone looks for.

She is friendly and has a very nice disposition. She's almost 15 hands now, I expect her to mature at nearly 16 hands.

She has no limitations, no injuries, and can go in any direction. Serious inquires only, \$5,500 obo

Contact Jessi 406-570-7166 with questions and for more pictures



Have a saddle or piece of packing equipment? Please email the information to Rochelle - ebenezerquine@gmail.com. The listing will be removed after 3 months unless you request otherwise.

MARCH MEETING MINUTES

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

3-5-2026

Call to Order: 6:30 PM, Joliet

Roll Call

Present: S Chepulis, J Guckenberger, C Linn, S Fluer, B Yager, J Jenkins

Absent: S Lewis, R Thomsen

Reading of the Minutes: Motion to approve: 1st Linn; 2nd Jenkins. Passed.

Officer Reports:

President: 7 Crosscut Saw certifications completed, 2 valid pending CPR cert/recert.

VP Report: none

Treasurer's Report: C Linn reported. Audit completed. Budget has been approved. February expenses were \$2124.79. Motion to approve: 1st Fluer; 2nd Guckenberger. Passed.

Committee Reports

1. **2027 Convention Committee.** Meeting scheduled around April 11/12 Youth Clinic, Columbus. Time tbd.
2. **Activities Committee**

Youth Clinic /Adult trail clinic April 11 and 12. Planning in process for specific agenda. Adults needing stock safety need to do the online course prior to 4/12. Adult clinic details will be planned at a meeting on 3/14.

Tack Sale 3/14AM26, Columbus Union Hall. 9 AM-3PM

Parades. Fishtail confirmed. Absarokee Days date pending, likely to conflict with other events. Recommend less glitter and more packing.

6th Annual BBCH Summer Rendezvous. Date mid Aug confirmed along with speaker from Grizzly Bear management out of Bozeman, Jeremiah Smith.

3. **Trail/Packing Committee**

Trail clearing schedule to be published in the newsletter. First will be April 22 or 29th Trout Cr/Bad Canyon/Beartrap OR Jim's Gulch/Lower Deer Cr, weather permitting.

ABWF Pack Projects J Jenkins to meet with ABWF for preliminary schedule - on 3/6.

Belfry Trailhead No news on the Belfry trailhead since last report.

4. Education Committee

March, H Butler. April, L Smeltzer on equine nutrition. Will need projector and screen. Summer Rendezvous, Grizzly Bear management, Jeremiah Smith.

5. Public Lands: S Fluer reported.

- a. USFS proposes changing roadless rule affecting public land access and use. There are no scheduled USFS public comment sessions. Wild Montana will set up meetings around the state for public comment to bring attention to this. There will likely be one in April in Red Lodge
- b. Recommend fostering relationship with Wild Montana as our interests/agendas are aligned with respect to fostering public use of public lands.
- c. DNRC considering sale of State Trust lands. DNRC has a survey on their website. C Linn recommended and board agreed that email blast be sent to BBCH general membership to encourage completing the survey to emphasize BBCH position to keep public lands public and to advocate for equine access on public lands.

Unfinished Business

Trail clearing schedule completed and to be posted in the newsletter.

Trail Boss Duties. Encourage project participants to be timely and complete with work reporting. Likely this will fall to the Trail Boss to complete for each project. A Wood at USFS in Red Lodge would like the report the following week after a project.

Club First Aid Saddle Bags and Garmin. Still missing and likely D Edwards has these. Will track down.

Chainsaw Class and Certification: March 20 class, Friday PM likely at Hanna Hall in Fishtail, with field work the following day 3/21, possibly at Benbow (TBD).

New Business

Potential convention registration for delegates. Up to 8 voting delegates per chapter at the annual convention may represent each chapter per BCHMT state constitution. Delegate needs to be present for all the business meetings at the convention in case votes are needed. BBCH reimbursement for delegate registration has been done differently, and inconsistently, from year to year. Most clubs do not reimburse delegate members for attending the convention in any form. In past some delegates with paid registration have not been involved in club activities nor attended the convention business meetings. Discussed trying to have general members not on the board become more involved by serving as delegates. Emphasis of members should be on volunteer service aligned with BCH mission. Reviewed budgeted amount for these expenses. Motion by B Yager, seconded by S Fluer: chapter will reimburse mileage, registration and motel for the President and state directors only, as they have other

responsibilities and meetings before, during and after the convention. Motion passed. Other discussion: voting delegates to be chosen randomly from the pool of willing attendees prior to the convention, and there will be no registration fee reimbursement.

Trail clearings: to begin mid-April, see schedule

Trailer/Equipment Discussion to inventory BBCH club equipment in trailer initiated by J Guckenberger. There is a concern for lost equipment. E.g., saddle bag covers with BBCH logo for parades -only 2 of 10 can be located. First aid kit and Garmin are missing. Discussed possibly move trailer to more central location. Then require signatures to sign out/borrow club pack gear and other gear. This will allow tracking of equipment so that missing equipment can be located. BBCH ID for equipment is black spray paint.

Purchase of new club saws. Convenience, durability and portability of Silky Saws discussed. Motion to approve \$700 to purchase 2x 500 mm Silky (Katanaboy) Saws for club use. C Linn 1st and J Jenkins 2nd. Passed.

Dates

Next General Meeting: Monday, March 16, Columbus MT

Next BOD Meeting: Thursday, April 2, Joliet MT

2026 BCHMT Convention: March 28-29, Bozeman MT

BCHMT State Director meeting: March 27, 1-4PM and March 29 12:15 PM Bozeman; May 9, 10 AM – 3 PM and Sept 19, 10 AM– 3 PM, Deer Lodge

2026 BCHMT Rendezvous, June 18-21, Monture Guard Station Cabin, Ovando MT

Adjourn 8:10

jj

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!



AGRI-GENERATIONAL
— CONTINUE THE LEGACY —

Brent D. Turner

✉ Bturner@brentturner.net
🌐 agrigenerational.com
☎ (615) 406-0419

243 Pine Crest Road
Columbus, MT 59019


Nordic, Alpine, Telemark instruction



BARNARD SKIING
Grant Barnard gbtelemark@gmail.com
406-425-0130

Stillwater Veterinary Clinic

557 North Montana Avenue
Absarokee, MT 59001
406-328-4159



Bar C Diamond Saddlery
Saddles, Leatherwork, Repairs

406-581-3904
seanchepulis84@gmail.com

Broken Fiddle Ranch
Dave & Chris Heinle
Clyde Park, MT 59018
(406) 321-4326
brokenfiddle ranch@gmail.com



Two Standing Jacks
JR, 13 hand Roan, \$350
Arkansas Mtn Man, 15 hand Black, \$500
Pasture Breeding, Fee + Mare Care

Bad Canyon Fence LLC.



Shelby B Burrows
Owner/ Operator
Shelbyburrows2@gmail.com

1 406 208 1139
3 Morning Glory Lane
Columbus, MT

For all your fencing needs



absaroka | beartooth
WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

Parks Reece