

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen Trail Tales

President's Pen

Greetings,

Happy summer! I hope everyone has fun plans and a good way to stay cool.

Thank you to Sarah Lewis and the entire crew who participated in the Fishtail Family Fun Days Parade. It was a great event, and our pack animals looked impressive. We even made the front page of the Stillwater County News!

Looking ahead, we have two ABWF pack trips on the schedule, as well as our annual campout at Meyers Creek on August 14–16. We plan to have Bear Management representatives join us at the campout for an informational discussion.

Additionally, our next General Meeting will be on July 20 at 6:30 PM. John Chepulis will be our guest speaker for the educational segment.

Hope to see you all soon. Stay safe!

Best regards,

Sean Chepulis

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:



July 20, 2026

Palladium Draughthaus at 6:30 pm

702 E Pike Ave, Columbus

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](#).

CHEAP TRICKS

CHEAP TRICKS (so you don't operate in the red)

Riding and packing are not inexpensive. Why not save a few dollars. Here are a few of my cheap tricks.

A good mechanical packing scale used to be about \$ 80-100. The common blue ones that have been around for years are no longer available. In 2016 I thought 80 bucks was too much. Yes, I know that's not that long ago. My electronic luggage scale, also relatively inexpensive (\$20-25), tended to get the on button pushed and then have a dead battery when I was ready to pack out and head home. It worked great at the trail head with fresh batteries. I guess you could store the batteries separate but that's more hassle. My solution was an old \$12.99 fish/grocer scale, piece of rebar, large cable tie, metal loop and duct tape. One advantage is a longer handle than a traditional scale. Pro tip: Rewrap the duct tape every year and it doesn't look as ghetto as mine.



I like small bottles of things like sunscreen or bug spray in my saddle bag. The cost per oz is usually much higher. It's the price of the smaller container and convenience. So, I refill the small bottles from a larger one. It's not always as easy as it looks!

And last, all those used horseshoes... What to do with them? You see a lot of welded art, coat stands and boot jacks. I'm not much of a welder, and an even worse artist. But holding water, or shall I say, an adult beverage, on a hot day seems to me a much more practical use.

Submitted by John Jenkins

OUR NEIGHBORS IN THE MEDIA

Keeping Gila Trails Open

Melissa Green coordinates Gila Back Country Horsemen volunteers who clear logs, rebuild tread, mark routes, and track conditions across one of the state's most remote trail systems.

Jul. 01, 2026 By [ELIZABETH MILLER](#)

THE GILA BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN organization has been clearing trails for more than 20 years. Melissa Green has been out there for 18 of them. She began with the U.S. Forest Service, then moved on to coordinating volunteer crews for trail workdays—or weeks, as the case may be. Green watched the federal program for trail work disintegrate and was afraid of seeing the Gila Wilderness with no one to maintain its trails. So around 2017, she pitched local nonprofits on hiring her to coordinate and grow their trail efforts, a bid that's landed her with Back Country Horsemen—even though she declines to ride a horse—coordinating about 150 volunteers throughout the year. They also update trail conditions in the rapidly changing Gila on gilatrailsinfo.org.

I couldn't just walk away from the Gila Wilderness. Gila Back Country Horsemen had a small crew, they were doing great work, and we've just taken it from there.

The horse packers bring in tools—because the Gila is so big—and log the trails. Any log that's lying across the trail so you can't just walk down the trail, we're removing.

I'm bringing in hikers. We'll take out the high branches that would maybe hit the horses, dig tread if it's hard to find. If the water is kind of eroding it, then we'll dig drains for the water to go off. Then we build cairns, and sometimes trail blazes, to kind of delineate where the trail is.

The cairns and trail blazes are kind of crux in the Gila, because it doesn't get a lot of use. Even if we dug tread, the tread would just regrow with lack of use.

The trails already had significant deferred maintenance, or there's fires and floods. Even if it was a more high-traffic one, a fire or flood can do a fair bit of damage.

When high-intensity fires burn mixed conifer, you're going to have a lot of dead trees that come down. Sometimes you log your way in, and you log your way back out, because the trees are coming down that fast.

A lot of our volunteers are in their seventies and sometimes eighties, so they're my heroes.

The Gila feels very remote—lots of solitude. You have to have your backcountry skills together, because yeah, you're out there. Having a variety of usable trails is essential. Keeping people going to different places is big so the wilderness stays pristine.



WEBSITE ARCHIVES



shutterstock.com - 2403097135

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.



ABWF-USFS/BBCH PACK PROJECTS

Dates and locations are firm. Details may change. Stay tuned. Weed free hay required at the trailheads.

July 15-21: Main Stillwater to Wounded Man trail. 11 miles one way. Packing camp, tools and food to the Wounded Man trail turnoff for the yearly Schriener's College trip. They will be doing maintenance work on the Wounded Man trail. This will require staying 1 overnight on both the in and out. July 15-16: packing in tools, staying the night and riding out the next morning. Ride in on the 20th, stay the night, then packing out gear on the 21st.

Aug 19-25. Bull Cr. Starting from Daisy Pass near Cooke City. ABWF crew clearing South Bull Cr or thereabouts. This will be a full day from Daisy Pass. Will need to stay overnight on both the in and out or stay the week. Will load up at the pass on the morning of 19th early at Daisy. Arrive the night before or arrive early. The crew will hike from Lake Abundance. Details to be determined. Specifics may change.

FOR SALE

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

JUNE MEETING MINUTES

Board Meeting June 04, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm at the Joliet Community Center.

In attendance: John Jenkins, Clark Linn, Jeff Guckenberger, Bill Yager, and Sarah Lewis.

Member in attendance: Melissa Codner

Motion to approve the May board meeting minutes made by John J. The motion was seconded by Bill Y.

No discussion. Motion carried.

President's Report: None Sean C. was unable to attend.

Vice President's Report: Jeff reports that the Initial Creek campout and trail clearings were a success. A small crew will be returning to finish clearing Rabbit Gulch.

Treasurer's Report: Discussion of May report, income & expenses, YTD, MTD, profit and loss statement.

Motion to approve the May Treasurer's Report made by Bill Y. The motion was seconded by John J. No discussion. Motion carried.

State Director's Report: No new updates. Report was shared at general meeting as well.

Committee Reports

2027 Convention: Melissa Codner (chair). Discussion of each committee's responsibilities. All committee members are working on their projects. The next convention meeting will be held June 15th 5:30pm at the Palladium.

Activities: Discussion of upcoming Fishtail Family Fun Days Parade on June 27th. Sarah is organizing. Horsemanship clinic by Wade Murphy will be held July 10,11 & 12.

Annual Camp Out August 14-16th. Meyers Creek Cabin is reserved, and special guest speakers are planned.

Education: Sean Chepulis (chair). Education for June general meeting TBD. Looking for members to be part of the education committee. A board member will continue to oversee the committee as required in the bylaws.

Projects: John Jenkins & Jeff Guckenberger (co-chairs). Discussion of clearing Beartrap on June 13th. Gallatin Valley co-project will remain in planning for next season with Jeff G. heading up project.

The Belfry Trailhead grand opening will be held June 12th at 10:30am. Encouragement to members to come support the project by riding that day.

Discussion of trail clearing that still need completed: Deer Creek- lower from Jim's Gulch. John J. will work on organizing a day for this.

ABW pack support project: Main Stillwater is July 15th-21st. ABW will attend June's general meeting to update the club on all support needed.

Public Land Issues: Scott Fluor (chair). No new updates. Scott was unable to attend.

Unfinished Business: Discussion of the mileage form being updated and published on the BBCH website for member's use.

New Business: Discussion of the Flood Creek Bridge project and if our support is still needed. This will be tabled as more information is needed.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by John J., seconded by Clark L. Meeting adjourned at 7:37pm.

Next meeting July 2nd at the Joliet Community Center at 6:30pm.

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!



Brent D. Turner

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🌐 agrigenational.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

brokenfiddleranch@gmail.com



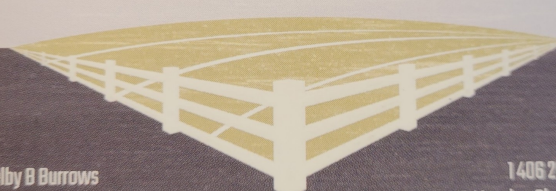
Two Standing Jacks

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

1406 208 1139
3 Morning Glory Lane
Columbus, MT

For all your fencing needs



BBCH PO Box 614, Absarokee, MT 59001