



Nag News

Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen
50 Years of Service

July 2026 Issue #7



BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN MISSION STATEMENT

- To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's backcountry and wilderness areas.
- To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
- To assist the various government, state and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
- To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
- To foster and encourage the formation of new back country horsemen's organizations.
- To cooperate with other BCHA organizations.

THURSDAY, JULY 16th, 2026 MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING

Coyote Coulee Trailhead Parking Area

Potluck Dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. The general meeting starts at 7:00 pm. Our speaker is Helen Engle who will provide a history of the Coyote Coulee loop trail system that was developed by her mother, Belle McGregor. Belle was instrumental in designing and developing this very popular trail system.

To get there take Hwy 93 for 9 miles south of Hamilton and turn west onto Lost Horse Road. Follow the road for 2 miles and turn right at the sign for Coyote Coulee and Camas Lake (Forest Service Road 496). The trailhead is a quarter mile ahead. Bring a chair and your own beverage.

Guests and new members always are welcome. For more information contact: Diane Duffie: 707-529-8284. Check out our website at: www.bchmt.org/bitterroot or Facebook: Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen.

Editor's Note: The June draft General Meeting and Board Meeting minutes have not been submitted for inclusion of this issue.

Editor's note: This issue dedicated to the life of our friend, Chuck Miller.

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A message from the President

Hello all. Hope you are all having a fun summer. Welcome to our new members, Scott and Angela Felger. Scott has already been an enthusiastic participant in our projects this year. We have successfully completed 2 of our planned projects, opening Two Good Cabin, cleaning up Larry Creek, and several of our members joined in on the BCH MT fence project at the State Montour Rendezvous organized by our member Mark Wright. Mark did an amazing job bringing all the clubs together to efficiently complete the project in a day and a half while creating a spirit of camaraderie between the different groups. His year long planning made for a smooth and fun event for all. A very special thank you to Mark for making our club look so good!

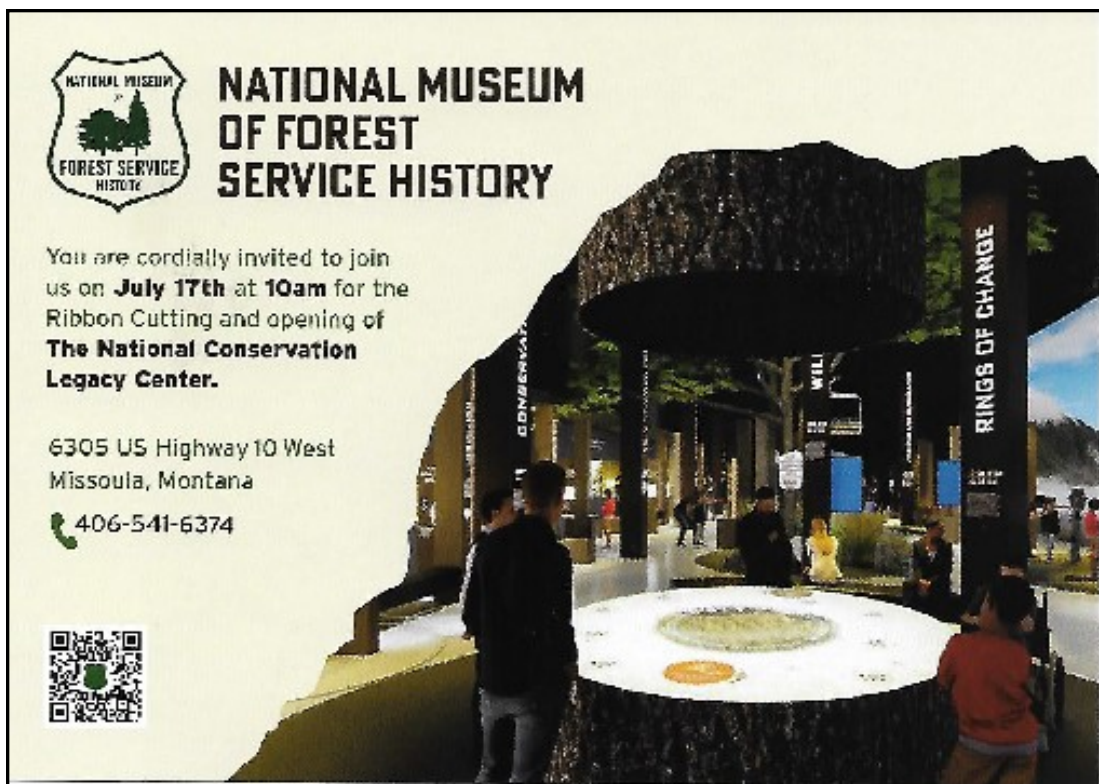
We have more projects coming up this month and next, back at Crazy Creek/Two Good Cabin to work on a bridge and picnic table and Coyote Coulee doing our yearly cleanup which we had to cancel due to

weather last month. We hope to see you all at one or the other.

We also have started signups for Ravalli County Fair where we manage the entrance gates. Fair dates are Sept 2nd-5th. There will be a new system of ticketing this year that will streamline the process and require less hands on sales and admission processing. The North gate also has been reconfigured to separate those coming and going which will help enormously with crowd management. Every volunteer gets a free ticket to the fair as a thank you. This is our only fundraiser and funds much of what we do and again we hope to see you there. It really is a fun small town fair if you haven't been.

We are still planning to get fun rides going and hope to do so this month as projects taper off. Stay cool and enjoy this beautiful valley with friends and family this summer.

Thank you all for being a part of BRBCH! Your President, Diane



The poster features the National Museum of Forest Service History logo on the left, which includes a shield with a tree and the text "NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FOREST SERVICE HISTORY". To the right of the logo, the text reads: "You are cordially invited to join us on **July 17th at 10am** for the Ribbon Cutting and opening of **The National Conservation Legacy Center**." Below this, the address "6305 US Highway 10 West Missoula, Montana" and phone number "406-541-6374" are listed. A QR code is in the bottom left. The right side of the poster shows a photograph of the interior of the National Conservation Legacy Center, with people walking through a modern, open-plan space. A large circular table with a map on it is in the foreground. The background shows a large, dark, curved structure with the words "CONSERVATION" and "RINGS OF CHANGE" visible.

Editor's Note: There will be a ribbon cutting and opening of the National Conservation Legacy Center at the FS Museum in Missoula on July 17th at 10:00 am. This event, organized by the USFS, is sure to be a fantastic celebration of our nation's conservation efforts. We encourage all members to attend and show their support.

Celebrating the Life of Chuck Miller

by Katie Miller

Feb 15, 1945-June 25, 2026

The mountains, open skies, winding trails, and trusted mules were never just places or companions to Chuck Miller—they were home.

For more than 40 years, Chuck was a dedicated member of the Back Country Horsemen of America. His unwavering commitment to preserving trails and serving the organization left a lasting mark. In recognition of his many contributions, he received the 2024 BCHA Montana Founders Award and the BCHA Lifetime Achievement Award. He also served extensively as a State and National Director and as Montana State President (years).

Before retiring to Montana, Chuck was a highly respected hand surgeon and emergency room physician in Spokane, Washington. He proudly served in the U.S. Air Force and was a decorated marksman during his time in San Antonio, Texas.

Chuck is survived by his wife, Diana, and his daughters, Katie and Heather.

He taught those who knew him to appreciate the quiet, work hard, respect the land, and to find joy in the outdoors. Though we wish we'd had more time, we are grateful for every memory. We will carry his stories, his strength, and his love of the backcountry with us wherever we go.

May the wind always be at his back, the mountains stand watch over him, and may his spirit ride free.

Ride free, Chuck!

Please join us for the Celebration of Life event happening August 9th at the Daly Mansion, Hamilton, MT starting at 1:00pm.



Chuck Miller awarded plaque for his decades of service to BCH (2016)

At our August 18, 2016 meeting at the Como group picnic area, members recognized Chuck Miller for his many years of service and commitment to Bitter Root BCH, BCH of Montana and BCH of America. Chuck is a legend in his own time! Here is his story:

As a young boy Chuck hunted and fished, and at 14 he went on his first pack trip to the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Being miles away from cities and waking to the sound of elk passing by so close he could see their shadows on the tent walls was heaven on earth for this Montana boy. Chuck fell in love with packing in the backcountry.

It took twenty years before he was able to buy his own horses and mules and return to packing and traveling in the backcountry. In 1980 Chuck and his family joined Back Country Horsemen and started doing volunteer work to keep public trails open. Over time Chuck expanded his pack string to six mules and became heavily involved in volunteer projects with the Forest Service and Bitter Root BCH.

When Chuck was asked what he has packed during his 35 years of volunteer projects he said, "The mules have been pretty tolerant of this old packer. We've hauled all kinds of

lumber (6' & 8' lengths), 4x8 plywood sheets, cement, tar paper, paint, nails, windows, wheelbarrows, culverts, propane bottles, gravel, all kinds of trail maintenance tools, rubber boats, rusted barbed wire and even explosives." Projects included restoring backcountry cabins and lookouts, and trail maintenance—chainsaw work, bridge construction, turnpikes, water bars, culverts and packing in camps for trail crews. He and his mules have volunteered 300-500 trail miles a year since he retired 22 years ago.

Besides his volunteer packing, Chuck has served many years as an officer, project committee chair, packing clinic co-chair, board member and state director for Bitter Root BCH. He has served 12 years as Montana's National Director on the Back Country Horsemen of America board and served on BCH of A's executive council for two years. He is currently a board member for the Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Wilderness Foundation.

When asked why he has dedicated so many volunteer hours and dollars to working on trails Chuck replied, "I have always believed in the BCH purpose of keeping public trails open for horseback use for future generations. I'm sure there's another 14-year-old out there who will be just as passionate about trail riding and packing as I am."

Chuck's bio as submitted for membership into the BRBCH:

I am a retired physician and was born and raised in the Flathead Valley. I was a member of the Idaho BCH from 1983 to 1993 and joined Bitter Root BCH when we moved to Hamilton in 1993. Besides my years of packing for our chapter, I have served as president, vice-president, board member, and BCH of Montana state board representative. I currently serve as one of your two state board representatives and recently completed eight years as a Montana National Director to the Back Country Horsemen of America board. I hope to continue representing you and would appreciate your vote.



Editor's Note: This submission by Brad Pullman nominated Chuck for the 2025 Founder's Award

CHUCK MILLER
Bitter Root Chapter

Chuck Miller is currently in his 43rd year of projects, mentoring, and representing BCH in its mission.

In Chuck's early BCH years, along with his string of fine mules, Chuck packed materials and tools for Forest Service trail crews and took every opportunity to share his skills and love of how to do this. As many of you know, packing a bridge timber is quite different than packing camping equipment or a quartered elk! What seemed like an overwhelming task came together with Chuck's guidance on how to pack in those 10' bridge timbers. He has built gravel bags for trail construction and maintenance, taught the use of lumber bunks, and how to safely introduce stock to both packing materials and being part of a string. He has shared his knowledge, time, and personal specialized packing equipment to those just learning the process. It is difficult to limit sharing his many examples.

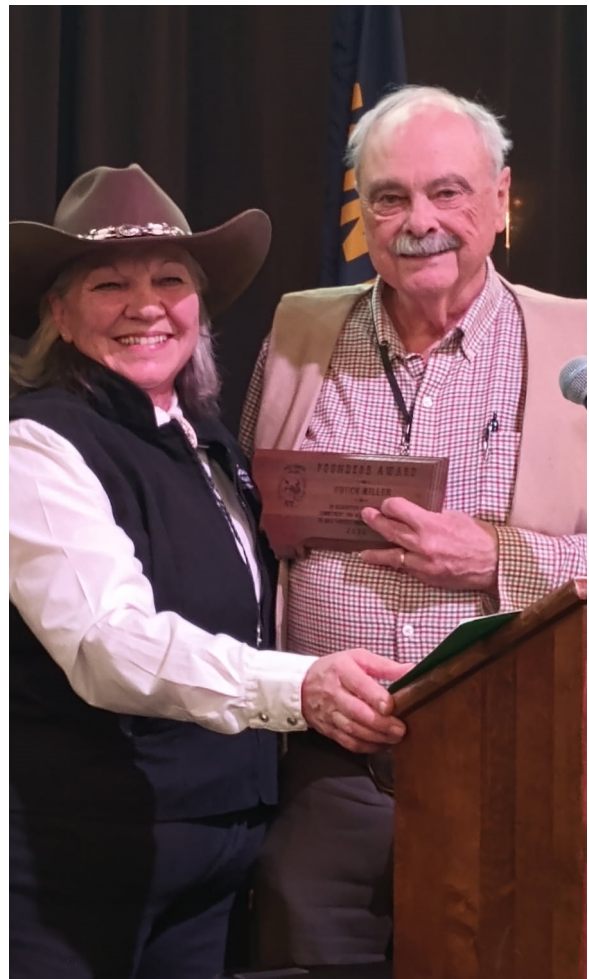
Chuck provides assistance and training across the board. He has been an active part of our wilderness skills classes in passing along his knowledge. His participation varies from setting up a horse camp, to knot tying, managing horses away from home, crosscut saw tips, and sharing trail information.

He was instrumental in creating a sanctioned trail system (Coyote Coulee) out of a user-created trail area that has become a model trail system for multiple use in Region 1. This trail system is heavily used in the spring as an area to tune up our stock that would have created resource damage by getting on other trails during the muddy season.

Chuck has mentored so many BCH members over the years, leading by example, from the basics of trail work through leadership positions at all BCH levels: chapter, state, and our national organization, BCHA. He continues to be a strong advocate for the mission of BCH, not only to our new members but also with the agencies that manage our public lands and other organizations we partner with. Perhaps we don't keep him busy enough, as he also holds a board of director position with the Selway-Pintler Frank Church Wilderness Foundation,

where he is instrumental in raising funds for interns working in our local wilderness. Working with these interns provides the hope they may become our future land managers who will have wilderness experience, showing a true appreciation of our wilderness. Chuck truly believes in our BCH mission and is willing to hit it from all angles – whether inside or outside of BCH itself, working with the young, the young-at-heart, inexperienced or those sharing his level of knowledge.

It is with great pride that I nominate Chuck Miller for this year's BCH Montana Founder's Award.



Chuck receives Founders Award from Connie Long

**Mark Wright, Project Leader - Summary of the
2026 Monture Guard
Station Rendezvous, Fun Ride and
Pasture Fencing Project
June 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st**

Project dedicated to Keith Guswchausky

***This fencing project was completely voluntary; and
not required for participation in the Rendezvous.***

On Wednesday, June 17, committee members and some BCH folks showed up to get the infrastructure set up; portable toilets, cook trailer, awnings, folding tables, coolers, banners, etc.

Thursday morning BCH volunteers met at the cook trailer for coffee and signed up on the volunteer agreement form. A “grab and go” tasty breakfast burritos were available and they could make themselves a “saddle bag” lunch to take to the work site.

BCH of Montana was showing support for the Forest Service Packing program by helping to fence a large new Pasture area on the Monture Guard Station compound. The project of clearing the acreage was started in 2024 by Keith Guschausky, a Forest Service Packer and former BCH member. Keith used a Skid steer with a timber grabber to start the process of making burn piles. At that time materials for the fencing project were purchased by Seeley Lake Ranger district and stockpiled until the project could be started. Since then the Forest Service has had major layoffs with seasonal employees. The project was projected as a three year project to fence, remove slash, treat weeds and non-native grasses. Keith Guswchausky passed away April 28, 2025 of cancer.

There were twelve volunteers that Thursday morning and by Friday morning there were a total of twenty-two BCH volunteers.

The job consisted of running three strands of barbless 12 ½ gauge twisted wire at appropriate height for wildlife to be able to jump but still retain the pack stock. The wire needed to be stretched to have the correct tension. “T” posts were pounded in at measured distances between

the “H” braces. Clips were installed to hold the wire to the “T” post.

BCH volunteers installed approximately 3000 linear feet of the fence. (This is just my estimate). There were approximately 200 volunteer hours on the fence project.

The Goal was met by Friday noon.

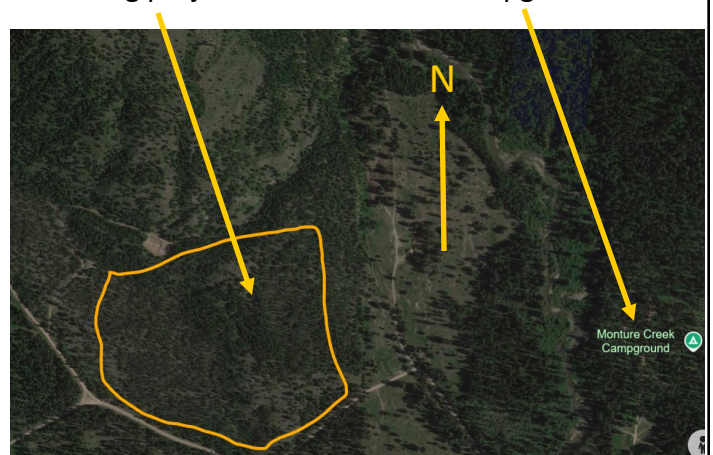
At 1:00pm Friday Wade Murphy offered a “Horsemanship” Clinic. The weather was warm and clear with a variety of skill levels and a mixture of horses and mules. Participants learned new concepts and techniques and reinforced existing skills. Wade did an awesome job as usual.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights included campfire stories and singing.

Folks that brought horses were able to get some nice trail rides in; The Forest Service Trail crew had previously been at work weeks before getting them cleared.

Saturday night was the main Rendezvous meal. There were 54 pre-paid tickets sold with some folks that were included such as the young Forest Service Trail crew that helped with the fencing and the trail clearing. The smoked pulled pork that was done by Scotty Tholstrom was excellent. There was people around each of the tables laughing, telling stories and having a good time. After dinner people brought their chairs around the campfire pit, with “Smoke” telling stories and Savannah playing her guitar and singing. Sunday started out with coffee and “Cowboy Church” under the awnings, service by BCH member Alivia Gower and a good message to end the wonderful Rendezvous and the start of Father’s Day.

Fencing project site Monture Campground





Camp Host checks
Lionel for permit

Mary and the
gang set clips



Jenna cooking 71
Breakfast burritos



Mark finally relaxing,
Gas powered T-post pounder



The last H-brace is wired by our crew.



Smoke entertains, Mark trims around an H-brace, Monture station cabin, and dinner table



Samantha plays both guitar and fencing tool, recites cowboy poetry, and rides in Wades clinic





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How much water does my trail horse or mule need? Keeping Your Horse Hydrated on Summer Rides.

Article Courtesy Outfitters Supply, Columbia Falls MT.

Share. As the weather continues to stay hot (and even gets hotter), it becomes more important to monitor the amount of water your stock takes in. While trail riding or on a packing trip, you should water your stock every chance you get. Learn how to prevent horse dehydration.

Try to get to a water source every couple of hours at a minimum during the summer heat, with unlimited water offered overnight. An average horse or mule requires around 10-13 gallons on a normal day. The amount needed will increase in hot weather and will be substantially higher when the animal is working hard. Like humans, horses sweat to cool down, and will need to replenish those lost fluids.

Plan ahead. Water is often not available at the trailhead. Pack water from home so that you can offer it both before and after your ride. This is also good for picky drinkers, so you are guaranteed that they have something familiar. Portable water tanks are great for this, but you can also use clean garbage cans or 5 gallon buckets with lids. Also, don't rely solely on your map to determine water sources during the ride, as creeks may dry up or water may be nearby but inaccessible. Double check both grazing and water availability with local rangers or fellow riders that have been in the area recently.

Carry a collapsible water bucket with you on the trail. Some areas have restrictions that do not allow stock to approach the water source, or the footing may be unsafe. If you come to a stream that you cannot walk down to, you can attach a rope to the handle to lower the bucket into the water. Allow the bucket to fill, and lift it back up to you. It's always a good idea to have a good, sturdy length of rope with you on a ride, whether it is for picket hobbling, setting up a highline, or hanging food in bear country, but even reins or lead ropes can be used in a pinch. Water the animals at home with the bucket prior to the trip so that they are used to it and recognize it as their own.

Stop and wait! When you reach a watering spot, make sure all animals have drunk their fill before anyone continues riding up the trail. Horses and mules are herd animals, so they will skip a much needed drink if they feel that they might be left behind.

Always provide water at mealtime. If you are feeding dry hay, cubes, or pellets, it is essential to have plenty of water available to prevent impaction colic. Another easy way you can supplement water intake is to soak the feed until well saturated before feeding. It's also a good idea to alternate smaller portions of food with water, rather than feeding the entire meal at once.

Clean, uncontaminated water is a must. Moving water from creeks and lakes is always preferable to water found in stagnant ponds and bogs. Often, horses will refuse to drink if they can smell any contaminants, even to the point of dehydration. Unlike dogs and humans, horses are unable to vomit. If horses are forced to consume water that is contaminated with dirt, algae or manure/urine they may become very sick.

Finally, it is a myth that you should withhold water from stock after hard work. You should allow the animal to drink 10 to 12 swallows, walk for a few minutes, and repeat until the horse is no longer interested in the water and the heart rate has returned to normal.

The availability of water is just as important a consideration as the trail conditions, grazing options, and good fishing holes. Plan ahead, take care of your stock, and you should have an enjoyable, safe trip.



BACKCOUNTRY KITCHEN

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The Shirt Spot is new to Montana since April 2023, but has over 20 years' experience in the industry! Services offered include printing, embroidery, sign banners, stickers and business cards. Quality clothing including tee's, tank tops, and ladies crop tops are offered at a reasonable price. Also offered is a huge variety of headwear ready for embroidery!

Exclusively at the Shirt Spot! Embroidered Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen logo on in-stock vests and jackets or a vest/jacket of your own choice. Personnel Wyoming Traders vest shown. Custom thread color available. Inquire for pricing. Caps offered in a variety of styles and colors! \$25/cap or \$20/each/10 caps. **Tell the Shirt Spot that you saw this notice in this newsletter! Show your support for our BCH Chapter!**

Key Lime Pie

Ingredients

Crust:

- 1-1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 stick melted butter

Filling:

- 2 cans (14 oz. sweetened condensed milk)
- 1 cup freshly squeezed key lime or regular lime juice (bottled is fine)
- 2 large eggs

Whipped Cream Topping:

- 2 cups whipping cream
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla

Directions

Combine graham cracker crumbs, sugar and butter. Press mixture into bottom and up sides of a large 10-inch pie plate. Bake 15 minutes at 375 degrees. Remove and allow to cool completely before filling.

Combine milk, juice and eggs in large bowl. Whisk until well blended; pour into cooled pie shell. Bake for 15 minutes in a 325degree oven; allow to chill in refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

Whip cream with icy beaters. Gradually add sugar and vanilla, whipping until soft peaks form. Spread over lime layer. Refrigerate.



2026 Committees

Audit
 Audio-Visual Equipment
 Constitution

Budget
 Election & Nominations

Fair
 Grants
 Historian
 Public Lands
 Long-Term Planning
 Membership
 Advertising
 Newsletter
 Outreach
 Parliamentary
 Pleasure Rides
 Programs
 Projects
 Social
 Sunshine
 Training
 Website

2026 Chairs & Members

2026: Barb Walker, Elaine Driskell, Nancy Pollman
 Travise Grinnell
 Dan Maiyo

Earl Phillips, Elaine Driskell
 (Changes Annually)

Christy Schram-Duggan
 Brandi Ashford
 Tim Meyer
 Brad Pollman
 Bonnie Morgan
 Barb Walker
 Virginia DeLeo
 Dan Maiyo
 Karen Philips
 Joan Scheffer
 Pam Ristad, Candice Erickson
 Pam Ristad
 Ed Duggan

Jenna Wright
 Bonnie Morgan
 Nancy Pollman

Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen Officers and Board**Chapter officers**

Position	Name	Term	Contact
President	Diane Duffie	2026	707-529-8284
Vice President	Barb Walker	2026	928-606-0855
Secretary	Cheyenne Raisor-Grinnell	2026	406-214-1108
Treasurer	Elaine Driskell	2026	916-698-8544

Board Members

Board Members	Term
Dennis Hardman	2026-27
Joan Scheffer	2026-27
Pam Ristad	2026-27
Ed Duggan	2026-27
Chris Carrera	2025-26
Mary Odell	2025-26
Julie Schram	2025-26
Christy Schram –Duggan	2025-26
Travise Grinnell	2025-26

State Directors

State Directors	Term
Brad Pollman	2026-27
Ed Duggan	2025-26
Alt. State Director	
Julie Schram	2026

BCHMT National Directors

Mark Himmel
 Connie Long

BRBCH Past President

Brad Pollman

BCHMT State Chairman

Sandy Himmel

BCHMT Vice State Chairman

Chris Nygren

Alt. National Director

John Chepulis

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Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen

50 Years of Service



NEXT BRBCH MEETING

Thursday, July 16th, 2026

Coyote Coulee Trailhead

Dinner at 6:30pm Meeting at 7:00pm

Visit our Website:

bchmt.org/bitterroot

DEADLINE FOR NAG NEWS

Thursday, August 13th, 2026
SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLES & ADS
TO:
djmaiyo@gmail.com

