

BACKCOUNTRY HOOFBEATS

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 BackCountry Horsemen Flathead

Long Time Coming by Laura Thomas

This trip we were about to embark upon is one that has been long in the planning and a long time in coming. You see I've always wanted to go to the Bob Marshall Wilderness, a bucket list if you will. But life had never presented me the opportunity, for various reasons, to go into the "Bob," so it was put on hold.



Through the years I would meet people who had been into the Bob and they always said, "It was the trip of a lifetime and an experience they would always remember. Yes, it's worth going, you will see a wild and spectacular country." These statements fueled my desire to one day go into the Bob. So when the opportunity came along in finding someone who shared my desire to go into the Bob, a plan was put into place for this trip and hopefully, many more.

We took a horse packing class, where we learned the ins and outs of packing and camping in the Wilderness with stock, which is a whole different approach to camping. A horse or mule can only carry so much weight, so we had to learn how to pack and what we would need. The most important aspect to learn is respect; respect for the land, animals and the conditions—for the Wilderness is not only beautiful but fragile as well. We also watched videos. This served two purposes; one, to learn and two, to fuel our

desire. We also joined Back Country Horsemen, a group of people who have not only a passion for the Wilderness but also for keeping the trails open for all. This group is a service organization who dedicate many hours of time, equipment and work to clean trails and teaching any who wish to learn about Wilderness and leave no trace camping.



An email arrived, informing us of a work outing over Memorial Day weekend cleaning trails at Meadow Creek, the trailhead for the Bob Marshall Wil-

erness. There it was, the opportunity to go see the Bob. So we ordered our wall tent, after much discussion about which tent was the best. But come to find it would be five weeks before we could get the tent. "Now what?" we ask each other. Where would we sleep? The horse trailer, in the back of the horse trailer!? Yes, that would work; we were going to the Bob!

The thought struck me as we drove along the Hungry Horse Reservoir further into the mountains and the remoteness of it all, "There's a somber, quiet, yet wild and majestic feeling all at the same time. No wonder people fall in love with this place we call Wilderness." We arrived late afternoon at Meadow Creek campground, unloaded horses, set up camp, and then decided to stretch everyone's legs and look around.

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Vice President— Jim Thramer
Treasurer— Deborah Schatz
Secretary— Greg Schatz
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THE PURPOSE OF BCH

The Back Country Horsemen is organized to:

- a) Perpetuate enjoyable common sense use of horses in the back country.
- b) Assist government agencies in maintenance and management of the resource.
- c) Educate, encourage and solicit active public participation in wise and sustaining use of horses and use by people commensurate with our heritage and the back country resource.

BCH Meeting Calendar

GENERAL meetings are held on the SECOND Tuesday of each month. BOARD meetings are held on the FOURTH Tuesday of each month. Everyone is welcome!! Meetings are held at the Fish, Wildlife and Parks building, 490 Meridian Rd. in Kalispell and begin at 7:30 PM.

Nov

13th — General Meeting 27th — Board Meeting

Dec

11th — General Meeting TBD — Board Meeting

Jan, 2019

8th — General Meeting 22nd — Board Meeting

Check out BCH of the Flathead's new website at:

<http://www.bchmt.org/flatbch/>

Please send comments/additions to your webmaster
Deborah Schatz.

President's Corner by Ed Langlois

President's reflection on the past season.

I want to say that I am proud of what the BCHF has accomplished this past season: From work projects to keeping up with various bills being considered by congress, to engaging the Forest Service on issues, to keeping horses in the forefront of the public. We wrapped up our season with a project replacing hitch racks and feed bunks at the Big River Trailhead on October 6th.

From early spring to late summer there have been educational classes for young kids to adults covering a wide subject matter. All of this has taken great dedication. The one common thread woven through these classes is HORSES. Their importance in the settlement of this country and their extensive use within the Forest Service when they were tasked with building fire lookouts and a comprehensive trail system which is still used today by millions of visitors to our public lands. These trails were, and still are, being used by pack stock for maintenance of said trails to transport of private parties, paying clients, scientific researchers, and others. Traveling with and interacting with horses does something for the betterment of a person's inner self. Sorry I cannot put that thought on paper in a better way. I do know that when I'm on top of a mountain looking out, I feel better when my horse is with me. Any other time or place the same can be said.

I didn't do as much this summer due to some medical issues (OLD AGE) that I can't do anything about, but modern medicine is making me feel better, and I will hopefully have a more active year coming up. So I have had time to reflect on why I do what I do. Having horses has not enriched me financially, but has enriched my life in many other ways. I enjoy using multiple use trails on a horse because I know that other people have a right to their enjoyment of those trails.

My greatest enjoyment with horses comes from putting a camp together, packing it on stock, and going for a Wilderness trip. When you are in such an area for a time, you come to realize a feeling that is unattainable in any other area. You then start to understand why such areas are so important, and why we have to preserve these places from the encroachment of modern recreation, and its many forms of modern transportation. With BCH support along with other groups I believe WILD can be kept in wilderness.

Regards,
Ed

Long Time Coming... continued from pg. 1

This country has a remote, wild and a free feeling and everything is bigger than life. The mountains, which have a rock face, are a part of the sky itself, where the clouds play about the tops on a daily basis. And these very clouds build up into the thunderstorms common in the Wilderness. They are quick, furious and often. The South Fork of the Flathead River is swollen and running fast with run off from the snows, so much that its color is chocolate milk. I looked at my love and said with moist eyes, "You have made a dream come true."

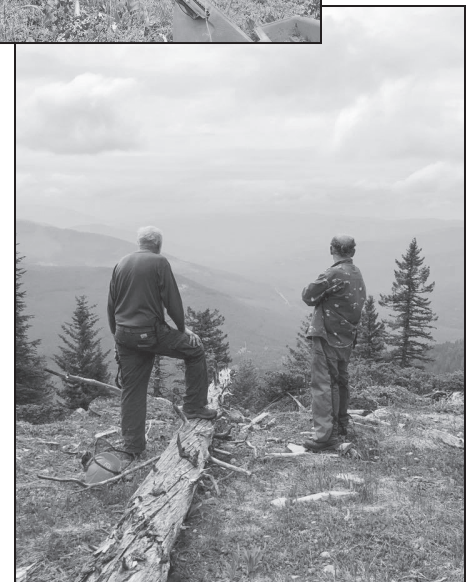
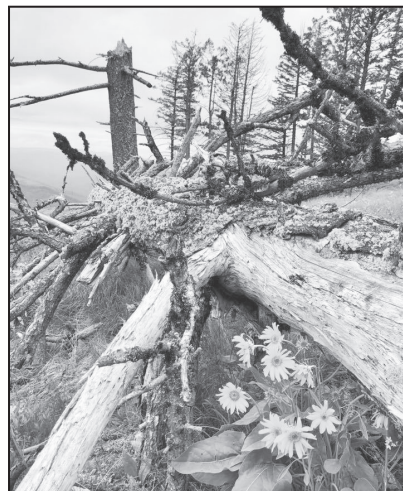
Our first night in the back of the horse trailer was, well let me put it this way, we were warm and dry and wishing we had our tent, but it worked. Friday morning dawned clear and bright and we go to get breakfast ready,

the propane. Good thing we brought matches and paper! After our breakfast we saddle our horses in readiness for our ride. As we head down the trail I find we have a small bridge to cross, I find bridges scary, but with walking across my horse I made it! Looking up to the tops of the mountains, I feel very small indeed, as we follow the trail that winds in and around the river and a meadow. I am in awe of this wild place that I am attracted to. We come to the sign officially announcing our arrival into the Bob Marshall Wilderness, a place I have longed to see for a very long time. Here we stop for lunch and pictures, then turn back to camp. This was an experience, one I hope to come back to time and again.



Elk Mountain Trail by Dan Oursland

They were right, Elk Mtn trail #252 is very scenic. It was a good day, we cleared over 50 trees. We found that up in this high country there is no shortage of large trees which seem to have a tendency when falling, to pick the option of going over the trail. The horses also enjoyed the abundant tall grass on the ridge top. Thank Jim for his good leadership on this project and Dawn for the pictures.



Challenge Cabin Project by Rick Maedje

Aug 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th, 18 Happy Souls showed up to help repair broken boards in the corrals and clear several different trails. Friday night we all got together for a gab fest. Saturday morning was a pancake breakfast with bacon and all the fixings and then off to work. Saturday night at camp we were honored with the presence of one of our founders Roland Cheek and his wife Jane. We then proceeded to have a big BBQ dinner with everyone contributing and ended the evening with another storytelling event and a competitive game of horse shoes. Sunday morning was another fine breakfast and time for some to pleasure ride and others to pack-up and head back to civilization and reality.

Thank You everyone for all of your good work and your contributions to make this project a success. You are

all very dedicated and appreciated.

Dedicated to preserving horse use in our back country. Best wishes to all,
Rick



A Season Without a Horse by June Burgan

Favorable weather is what governs trail projects. It takes a lot of planning to get the most accomplished in the short season. The majority of these are done by members with horses/mules traveling miles to get to the location.

I want to tell you about my year being physically unable to ride my horses. I continue to be an active member by participating with education. The West Valley Cub Scouts Pack #4921 watched a "show and tell" about our Wilderness and how to travel and camp doing very little damage. The Horse Packing and Wildland Camping class at FVCC was a success with student Drew Lurie receiving the \$50 scholarship offered by BCHF and a new member, Jessica Shaw.

Earth Day was an opportunity to interact with

youngsters about ways to save the ecosystem for the next generation. The Packing Clinic at the Eagles Club in Columbia Falls took many members to organize and be on-site; it was a success. The hands on packing education with Mr. Butts' Vo-Ag class was another youth education opportunity.

Many of our members volunteered at The Event at Rebecca Farm as judges and at the information booth in the Trade Fair tent. I was proud to drive the vehicle carrying the banners for the parade at Heritage Days and at the NW Montana Fair. It was a privilege to take part with BCH Montana at Indian Meadows and Boone and Crockett youth camps.

It was a very busy summer.

Meadow Creek Project by Greg Schatz

Once again this year the Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead gathered at the Meadow Creek trailhead Memorial Day Weekend for our first official project of the summer. We had a great turn out, got a bunch of work done cutting out most of the trails that lead out of the trailhead, and fun was had by all. Along with the trail work we had a professional photographer, Mandy Mohler, take pictures to help in our ongoing marketing campaign. With the help of Mandy we had a nice article about the Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead published in the summer edition of the Flathead Living Magazine. If you have not seen that article you can find it here: flatheadbeacon.com/2018/08/12/service-from-the-saddle.

Sometimes people ask why our chapter continues to go to Meadow Creek every Memorial Weekend to do trail work when it's not the handiest trailhead to get to. Our chapter has been clearing trails out of Meadow Creek for over 40 years. Deborah and I have been joining in the fun for about 30 years. The Forest Service really appreciates us doing this trail clearing early in the season so when their trail crews start for the summer they can get deeper into the Wilderness quicker. There are many trails leading out of the trailhead so we can spread out and have crews of 5 or 6 people working on each trail. The trailhead is large

enough that 40-50 people can camp there comfortably. There is also a lot of work that can be done around the trailhead for people who don't have horses or are not comfortable taking their horses out on the trail. For me I keep going because it's often the first time I am able to ride in the Bob for the season.

We do realize that the drive to the trailhead can be intimidating for people who haven't been up there before. It is about 70 miles of gravel from Coram to the trailhead. The Forest Service tries to keep the road in good shape because of the heavy use it gets. The thing to remember to make it a successful drive is that there is no hurry to get to the trailhead, it's not a race. We hope you are able to join us next year. If you have questions about this annual project please be sure to ask. Watch for more information in the Spring '19 newsletter.



Rich Owens, trail specialist for the Spotted Bear Ranger District, standing on the left and District Ranger Scott Snelson second from left.



photo by Mandy Mohler.

What We Accomplished This Summer by Deborah Schatz

Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead (BCHF) completed 29 projects this field season. Our training sessions started in early spring with first aid, defensive horse safety and saw training. One of the highlights this spring was our packing clinic at North Valley Eagles. Smoke Elser was our star presenter and he drew a lot of folks from around the area to watch his packing techniques. Hunters, outfitters and local horsemen enjoyed his presentation, which was followed by a pig roast and music.

We hit the trails on Memorial Day with our annual project at Meadow Creek. Thirty-four people participated in clearing trails, cleaning up the campground and enjoying the fellowship of our members and other horse enthusiasts. Seven more trail clearing projects were completed throughout the summer, for a total of 133 miles cleared and 649 man hours of work donated to our public land managers. Our four-legged friends provided 321 work days throughout the season.

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of the Flathead
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This Summer... continued from pg. 5

BCHF members volunteer each year at The Event at Rebecca Farm. This year we served as jump judges, score runners, and lunch truck drivers. We also had a beautiful educational booth in the big tent. Our education includes leave no trace camping and stock techniques, weed awareness, and back country travel and packing techniques. BCHF participated in eight events around the valley, including Earth Day and Family Forestry Expo.

Youth education was another highlight of the 2018 season. BCHF gave packing classes at five youth summer camps around western Montana. The kids ranged in age from 10 to eighteen, and wow, do kids ever love horses! We hope to expand our youth activities next year. It is very rewarding to see young people enjoying the outdoors and learning about Montana's back country opportunities. BCHF totaled 715 hours of education this season.

We want to thank all the officers, directors and members of our chapter who participated in another amazing year. We all have different talents and we welcome anyone who would like to come and help us with our busy program and furthering the purposes of our service organization.

Welcome New Members!

Please welcome new members: Jennifer Abelle, Jessica Brewer, Allisha Hitt, Lee Jester, Tami Peterson, Tiffany Rickert and Jerome Val Rios, and Tiffany Vedder.

“There is but one hope for repulsing the tyrannical ambition of civilization to conquer every square inch of the earth. That hope is the organization of spirited people who will fight for the freedom and preservation of the wilderness.”

- Bob Marshall

Become a member in 2019 !!!

Dues are \$45 per year for a family, or \$35 per year for single membership. This price includes all newsletters - local, state and national. Please fill in this form and mail it to BCH of the Flathead, P. O. Box 1192, Columbia Falls, MT 59912.

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