

The Feedbag

October 2025



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bchmt.org/wp/missoula

**Mailing address:
P.O Box 2121
Missoula, MT
59802**

WELCOME LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

It has been a busy spring and summer!

We had the Back Country Horsemen of Montana Rendezvous at Gold Creek off I-90 on the Beck Ranch at the end of June. About 100 people from the chapters across Montana participated. We rode to the Pioneer Ghost Town, the old gold dredge, and saw a band of about 30 wild horses. Mike and Trish Foster barbequed dinner on Saturday night.

We had many weekly rides, both during the week and on the weekends. We helped with pack support for the Job Corps trail crew on the East Fork of the Bitterroot River, just before Sula. We did pack support for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation to Silver King trail out of Indian Meadows in the Scapegoat Wilderness northeast of Lincoln. We also did pack support for the Great Burn Conservation Alliance up Straight Creek in the Great Burn out of Clearwater Crossing. There were pack trips to Johnson Lake in the Pintler Wilderness and to the Wilderness Study Area in the West Pioneers out of Wisdom.

As fall sets in, we hosted our annual Ice Cream Social and Trivia night hosted by Smoke and Thelma Elser in their barn, with Eva Maria Maggi conducting the trivia contest. About 40 people participated.

We have also been involved with important issues. We took part in giving feedback to our congressmen against the selling of public land and against the removal of Roadless Areas. We have been appointed by Fish, Wildlife and Parks to participate in the development of the Fish Creek Game Range and State Park. We are participating with Missoula Trail Partners, Pups for Public Land by the Montana Conservation Votes and have participated as a Trail Ambassador for Missoula Parks and Recreation.

We are now looking forward to board elections in November, our annual Christmas Party on Dec. 13 and the many wonderful monthly programs that Jane Kelly has scheduled for our membership meetings. See page 2 for more information about when and where meetings take place.

Hope to see you all soon,

Ken Brown

2025 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Officers

Ken Brown, president
Jane Kelly, vice president
Elise Foster, secretary
Lionel Lavalley, treasurer
Eva Maggi, past president
Dan Harper, state board representative
Judy Allen, state board representative
Radley Watkins
Taylor Orr
Eric Skelton
Mike Chandler

Committee Chairs

Issues	Radley Watkins
Membership	Judy Allen
Social Chair	Sydney Young
The Feedbag newsletter	Carey Powers

SAVE THE DATE CHRISTMAS PARTY 2025!

**Mark your calendars for 6 p.m.,
Saturday, Dec. 13!** The annual Christmas
Party and Potluck will be held at the GW
Marks Exploration Center in Missoula (1075
South Avenue West).

Please bring a dish to share. BYOB if you'd
like. Speaker to be announced soon. This
event follows the Backcountry Horsemen
of Montana annual meeting, which will be
held earlier in the day at the Fish, Wildlife
and Parks building (3201 Spurgin Road).

MISSION STATEMENT

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's backcountry and wilderness.
2. To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreation and stock use.
3. To assist the various agencies responsible for the maintenance and management of public lands.
4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustained use of the backcountry resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state Back Country Horsemen organizations.



MEETING SCHEDULES

Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Smoke Elser's barn (3800 Rattlesnake Drive in Missoula) Any member is allowed to sit in on a board meeting. The issues committee meets at 5:30 p.m. monthly before the board meeting at the same location.

Membership meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Fish, Wildlife and Parks office at 3201 Spurgin Road in Missoula. Membership meetings feature a guest speaker, sweet treats and an update on what our chapter is up to. Membership meetings are **not held** during the following months: December, February, June, July, and August.

*Want something featured in the next newsletter?
Email us at missoulabch@gmail.com!*

Inaugural Horse Farm Tour and Storytelling Event Held at the Harpers

by Natalie Sullivan

Turning up the drive off Marshall Canyon Road, attendees were met with a bright MSU Extension sign and arrows pointing the way to the equestrian property on the fringes of the Lolo National Forest. They parked and followed the driveway past the hay barn, the fall colored trees, down the hill through the garden, and through the sacrifice area to the indoor arena.

Breeders, trail riders, horse show competitors, dude ranch owners, conservationists and even one county commissioner were greeted by the Harper's dog, Rusty, and encouraged to peruse the line of tables advertising the plethora of resources sponsored by Montana State University Extension, Montana Farmer's Union, Missoula Conservation District, Backcountry Horseman of Missoula, and Montana Forestry Consultants. The crowd grew beyond expected numbers and the first annual Horse Farm Tour and Storytelling event commenced!

The educational portion of the Horse Farm Tour started at the Harper's sacrifice area well placed on high ground between the hay barn and indoor arena. Three pairs of equine eyes stared back at us from around the geothermal water tank. The audience learned that a well thought out, improved sacrifice area is the very first step towards a productive land management plan. A sacrifice area, appropriately sized for the herd and amount of use, is where traffic is heaviest and nothing grows. Sacrifice areas are central to water, shelter, and hay storage.

Natalie explained that she thinks of all horse properties, big and small, as having three equine friendly areas; a sacrifice area, a "garden", and a "flex" area.

The "Garden" is how she thinks about the greenest and lushest part of your horse property. This is where land stewards, wanting green grass for their horses 6 months of every year, spend the most time and energy, as you would a vegetable or flower garden. You weed it, water it, and most importantly, protect it from overgrazing.

The "Flex" zones are areas where you give yourself some grace. These could be alleyways to greener pastures, pastures that get heavier use due to life and circumstances, and generally are not as productive as the "Garden".



The group continued out to the Harper's rotational grazing area where we discussed manure spreading, soil testing results, strip grazing principles, and so much more! It's beyond the scope of this article to describe all of the principles that the group learned, but suffice it to say that Dan and Natalie were a dynamic duo.

The major benefit of a wellthought-out grazing management system is LOTS of green grass, year after year after year!

After much Q&A and observation, the group returned to the indoor arena, the fall light quickly fading outside. As dinner plates were being scraped clean, Natalie and Marge Harper went to the front of the arena and settled into seats.

Marge recounted her memories of community philanthropy including acquiring and formalizing the agreement between the Missoula Horse Council and Missoula County for the property now known as the Big Sky Horse Park. Marge was absolutely central to the development of the Big Sky Park and we are eternally grateful for her work.

Next, Dan stood up and told of the time that he and Marge bred their very fancy Arabian mare to a Jack mule and basically were ex-communicated from the Arabian horse club. Everyone chuckled.



Finally, our very own county commissioner, Juanita Vero, stood up and, like a pro, told a story titled “Hybrid Vigor”. Much to the audience’s delight, the story wove together Juanita’s demographic story of heiress and ranch hand with her training of a Morgan/mustang cross horse on the ranch. The story was magical and at its conclusion was met with wild applause.

The inaugural horse farm tour and storytelling event was a wonderful success. The team of local organizations are excited to bring these hands-on, visual learning experiences to Western Montana next year.

Stay tuned by subscribing to the MSU Extension Missoula County Light on the Land Newsletter by visiting missoulaeduplace.org!

Need some inspiration or something to listen to on your drives to the trailhead?

Podcast: *History and the Horse: Sergeant Reckless, America’s Korean War Horse*

“I was amazed by the story of Sergeant Reckless, a Thoroughbred born to race, but who instead served with the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. There are several resources available to learn more about this amazing mare that was promoted to Staff Sergeant for her contributions to the war efforts. My favorite tidbit was that she was fed scrambled eggs and pancakes for breakfast, and had a cup of coffee with it! She truly accomplished some amazing feats and was well-loved and respected by the soldiers she served with.”
--Sydney Young, social chair

Meet our newest board member!

Elise Foster

Hi, I'm Elise and I recently retired from federal government service as an attorney for the U.S. Forest Service. In that role, I spent 17 years in Ogden, Utah and the last almost 13 years in Missoula.

I'm originally from Chicago, Illinois. I grew up loving horses and riding English at a local stable, but never had a horse of my own until living in Utah. I have always had quarter horses, but I currently also have a seven year old Mustang named Winx from the Silver King Management Area in Nevada.

I recently sent my 27 year old quarter horse, Rio, to the big pasture in the sky. I had her since she was six years old (pictured below with me).



Elise and Rio

I enjoy trail riding and raised my kids in 4-H riding clubs in Utah. We live in Grant Creek on 22 acres. In addition to horses, we have chickens, goats, several dogs and one barn cat. I grow lavender, which I dry and sell locally, and I am an enthusiastic gardener of fruits and vegetables. I also enjoy hiking and cross-country skiing. I joined the Backcountry Horsemen as a way to meet more folks who like to ride. I'm very grateful for the friends and friendships I've gained as a result of this chapter. Thank you for having me as your club secretary.



Rio and Bella



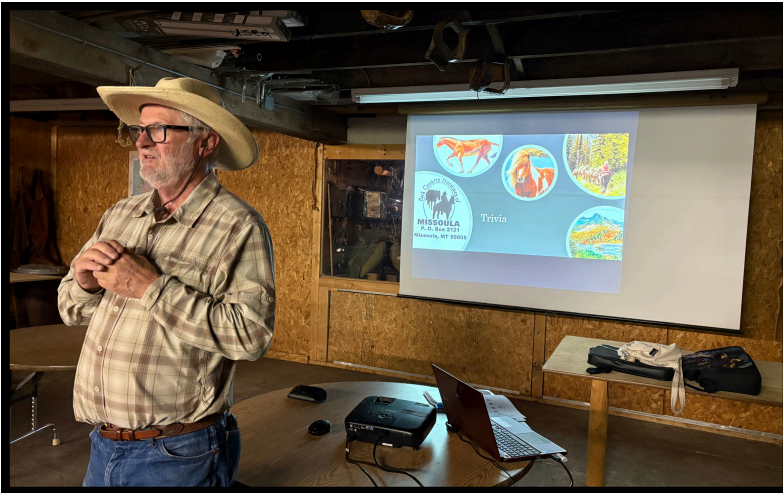
Winx



Dan Harper, Kathy McGann and Ken Brown in the West Pioneers, submitted by Dan Brandborg



Clearwater Crossing trip, submitted by Rob Braun



Annual trivia night and ice cream social at Smoke's barn. Submitted by Ken Brown and Radley Watkins



West Pioneers Wilderness Study Area pack trip. Submitted by Dan Harper



Equus International Film Festival

by Radley Watkins

The Equus International Film Festival returned to Missoula in September. This Festival was founded in 2011 and features award-winning equine films, including documentaries, features, narrative and non-fiction, news and more.

This included three days of clinics, presentations, and award-winning films that promote and highlight the bond and partnership between horse and human, surrounding the theme: A New Vision in Horsemanship: The Partnership Between Horse & Human.



Radley and his mare Maggie at one of the demonstrations at the Big Sky Horse Park



This year's keynote was Dr. Temple Grandin, world-renowned animal scientist, autism self-advocate, and author known for revolutionizing humane livestock handling practices and for advocating for individuals with autism.

Several BCHM members participated in the clinic demonstrations at Big Sky Horse Park with Dr. Grandin, and new friends were made all around.



FREE Pasture Evaluation by Missoula County Dept. of Ecology and Extension

The purpose of the Pasture Evaluation Program is to bring up-to-date, unbiased information from the university extension system and local county resources directly to your private or commercial farm or ranch.

This is a free service to Missoula County residents who want to make their properties more productive, safe, and beautiful!

All Missoula County properties with horse, cattle, and small ruminants are eligible, regardless of size, function or breed of animals. Properties are serviced on a first come basis; completing this form will hold your place in line. Sampling typically begins in April and continues through September. Visit missoulaeduplace.org to learn more!

BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF MISSOULA

P. O. Box 2121 Missoula, MT 59806

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

Street

City

State

Zip

PHONE #: _____ EMAIL: _____

ATTENTION!!

Notice of Risks Inherent in Equine Activities: Serious injury or even death can result from equine riding and related activities. There are risks inherent in equine activities, and these dangers or conditions that are an integral part of equine activities include but are not limited to: a) the propensity of an equine to behave in ways that may result in injury or harm or the death of persons on or around the equine; b) the unpredictability of an equine's reaction to such things as medication, sound, sudden movements, and unfamiliar objects, persons or other animals; c) hazards, such as surface and subsurface ground conditions; d) collisions with other equines or objects; e) the potential of another participant to not maintain control over the equine or to not act within the person's ability.

Participants in any equine activity shall act in a safe and responsible manner at all times to avoid injury to themselves and others and shall be aware of the risks inherent in equine activities.

The Back Country Horsemen of Missoula shall not be liable for injury to or the death of a participant as a result of their voluntary participation in any sponsored activity.

****I certify that I have read and understand the above notice****

MEMBERSHIP DUES

_____ Family: \$45/year New Member _____
_____ Individual: \$30/year Renewal _____
_____ Secondary Membership: \$15/year

The membership list will be distributed to the members to be used only for legitimate BCH Missoula business. You may choose to opt out by place a check next the following options:

opt out of email sharing _____ opt out phone number sharing _____

Membership is on a calendar year basis (expires December 31st). Please make payments to Back Country Horsemen of Missoula. We accept checks or cash. ~~We do not accept credit cards.~~ Any membership dues received after October 1 will be applied to the following calendar year.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Feedbag (quarterly club newsletter)? EMAIL _____ MAIL _____

Occasional notices of meetings, rides, and special events? EMAIL _____ CALL _____

State BCH Newsletter? EMAIL _____ MAIL _____

Print Name _____ **Signature _____ Date _____