

# The Feedbag

March 2026



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[bchmt.org/wp/missoula](http://bchmt.org/wp/missoula)

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P.O Box 2121  
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59802

## WELCOME LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

A new year is upon us, again!

We will have a full year of events. We will have challenges, with the reduction of Federal agency staff and possible increased trail clearing due to some strong weather events.

There are challenges to back country with efforts to change Roadless Areas, Travel Plans and Wilderness Study Areas. The winter has been mild so far and the fire season is yet unknown. The Back Country Horsemen of Missoula, Montana and America will be involved in these issues. But let's not forget we will have many miles to travel on our stock this spring, summer and fall, enjoying our back country!

*Ken Brown*



Ken with his trusty mounts, Tux and Maverick

## 2026 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

### Officers

Ken Brown, president  
Jane Kelly, vice president  
Elise Foster, secretary  
Lionel Lavallo, treasurer  
Dan Harper, state board representative and past president  
Judy Allen, state board representative  
Radley Watkins  
Taylor Orr  
Mike Chandler  
Kirsten Pabst  
Laura Lundquist  
Rob Braun

### Committee Chairs

<b>Membership</b>	Judy Allen
<b>Social Chair</b>	Donna Leik
<b>The Feedbag newsletter</b>	Carey Powers

## 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.

## SADDLE FOR SALE!

Francesca Vitale is offering a 15" Billy Cook All Around for \$1,800. Contact her at 406-207-2041.



*Want something featured in the next newsletter?  
Email us at [missoulabch@gmail.com](mailto:missoulabch@gmail.com)!*

## Step-by-Step Instructions for Saddle Cleaning

by Ken Brown

### Supplies checklist:

1. Small bucket for water
2. Lexol Leather Tack Cleaner – can be purchased at Murdoch's (BCH members get 10% off!). Some people use saddle soap, but it can leave a residue.
3. Skidmore's Leather Cream – can be purchased at Murdoch's. For treating the leather to protect it and keep it supple/flexible for decades.

### A note on oils:

Many people use Neatsfoot oil after cleaning their tack and leather. Terry Wagner in Mule Magazine warns that too much oil can damage leather by clogging the pores of the leather. Oxidation is the result of too much oil use. He also noted that neatsfoot oil gathers dust and dirt on the surface of the leather.

It can also stretch leather, such as latigos and stirrups. It does not shield the leather from ultraviolet rays; Skidmore does as it has beeswax in it. Neatsfoot oil can also change the of the color of your saddle to a dark color. But having said that, each to their own. Use what you feel comfortable with.



### Process:

1. Remove the loose dust, dirt and hair from your saddle. An air hose on a compressor, or a leaf blower works well for this. You will want to do this outside.
2. Put your saddle on a saddle stand with a tarp underneath it if inside.
3. Apply leather cleaner in small areas at a time.
  - a. Shake the container well and apply the cleaner to a clean microfilter cloth or small damp sponge.
  - b. For a deep clean, massage into the leather.
  - c. Wipe away foam and dirt using a damp cloth. You may have to rinse the cloth or sponge from time to time to remove the dirt collected by the saddle.
  - d. Dry with a towel and let sit to air dry. If you have the time, let the saddle completely dry overnight.
  - e. Buff out the saddle with a dry micro-cloth or shoe polish brush.
4. With a clean, warm and dry saddle, apply small amounts of Skidmore's Leather cream sparingly to small areas at a time with a cloth or small damp sponge. Do not use on suede or on your latigo. It is best to apply to both sides of the leather. If you can, let it set until the next day for the conditioner to fully penetrate the leather.
5. Remove excess with a clean, dry cloth. Buff out the leather.

Deep clean your saddle following this process at least once per year.

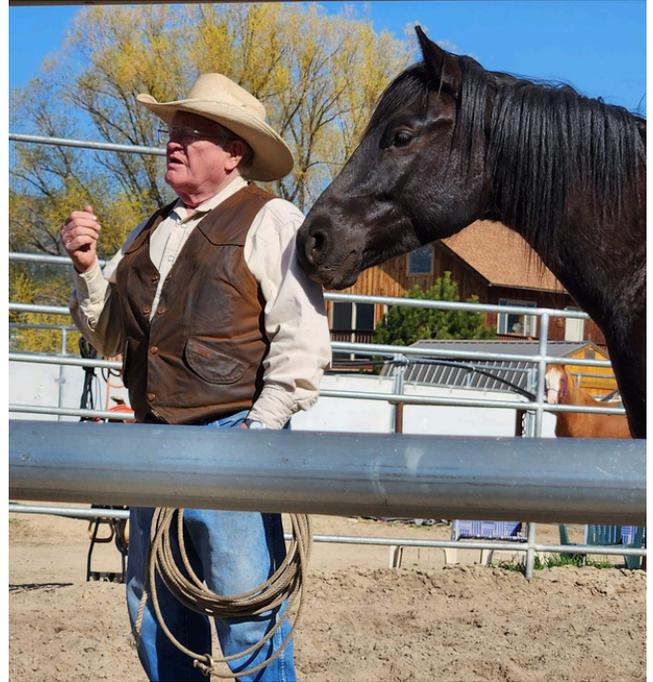
## Remembering Gary Salisbury

by Carey Powers

Longtime board member and former BCH president Gary Salisbury passed away on Oct. 16, 2025, in Missoula. Gary was a lifelong cowboy and horse trainer.

During his time with our chapter, Gary held many positions as state board representative, auctioneer extraordinaire at the annual roundup, mentor and clinician.

A memorial service for Gary was held on a beautiful sunny fall day at the Florence-Carlton Church, which he frequented. Multiple rows of extra chairs were needed to accommodate everyone who showed up to pay respects. His children and family members gave heartfelt and entertaining eulogies. His horse was tacked up in the parking lot with the customary backwards-facing boots in his stirrups.



Below is an excerpt from his obituary:

“Gary leaves a legacy of mended fences and healed hearts. While the measure of a man is often taken by his accomplishments, Gary’s true worth was found in the steady hand and gentle patience he extended to every soul he met—whether human or animal.

Gary’s compassion shone brightest in the company of animals. They were his kin, his teachers, and his deepest companions. He was rarely seen without a loyal dog by his heel, and his days were often marked by the rhythmic, steady presence of his beloved horses.

To witness Gary with an animal was to understand the purest form of unconditional love. And, watching him work was a lesson in how a real cowboy tends the herd.”

*Rest in peace*



## **In Case You Missed It: Roadless Rule Rescission**

by Mack Long, BCH MT

### **What is the Roadless Rule?**

Since 2001, the Roadless Rule has prevented unnecessary road building across 6.4 million acres in Montana and 58 million acres nationwide. The Rule limits new road building and timber harvest, but it explicitly allows proactive forest management, fuel treatments, and road construction to keep our communities safe from wildfires. It allows all existing roads and supports existing recreational access.

### **Stop the Rollback of the Roadless Rule**

This rule protects 58.5 million acres of undeveloped national forest land, including 6 million acres in Montana and 44.7 million acres nationwide. These lands are critical for maintaining clean water, intact wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and high-quality recreation opportunities. Removing protections would have long-lasting, irreversible impacts.

Backcountry Horsemen of Montana have worked in concert with the Forest Service for years, maintaining and building trails on many of these lands for all public use.

New road construction in currently protected areas will fragment critical wildlife habitat and degrade watersheds that provide clean water to people, fish, and wildlife.

The U.S. Forest Service already has a \$4.4 billion road maintenance backlog. Adding more roads is fiscally irresponsible and unsustainable.

USFS staffing shortages due to recent layoffs make it increasingly difficult to manage even existing lands. The solution must not be land sales or transfers, which would result in permanent loss of public lands.

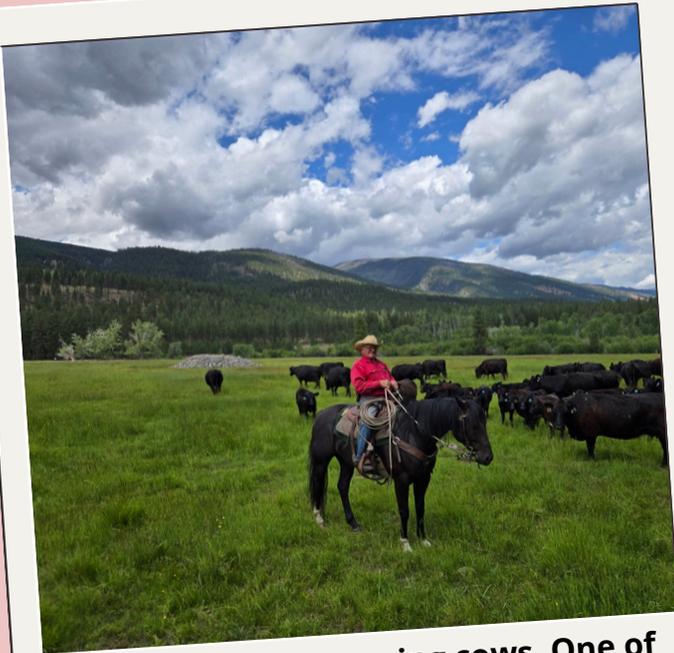
Iconic at-risk areas in Montana include lands surrounding the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, regions north and west of Hebgen Lake, parts of southwest Montana along the Idaho border, Beartooth Front near Red Lodge, significant parts of the Bridger Range, Blodgett Canyon and Bass Creek in the Bitterroots, portions of the Crazy Mountains, portions of the Swan Range and numerous roadless "islands" across the state.

This proposal presents a false choice: to repeal all protections or do nothing. A more responsible approach would include site-specific analysis and stakeholder engagement. The current Roadless Rule already allows for public safety, wildfire prevention, and emergency exceptions, making repeal unnecessary. Catastrophic wildfire risk is primarily driven by climate change, not lack of roads.

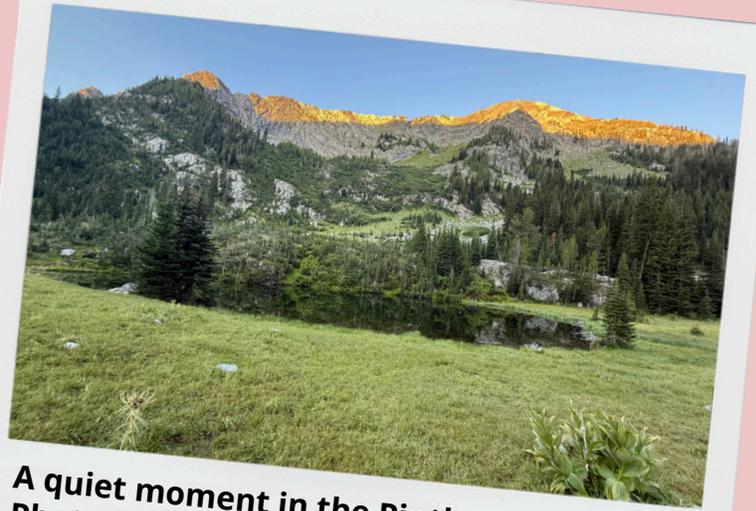
The process is being rushed with a short 3-week comment period, limiting public input and thoughtful review of the consequences.

Nearly one-third of Montana's national forests would be affected by this change — a decision of this magnitude requires full public engagement and careful deliberation.

Repealing the Roadless Rule would dismantle decades of bipartisan conservation work and damage the ecological integrity of public lands meant to serve future generations.



**Gary on Keeper, moving cows. One of his last rides. Photo by Randy Kappes**



**A quiet moment in the Pintler Wilderness. Photo by Dan Harper**



**Kathy McGann and her string. Photo by Ken Brown**



**Jane Kelly got an early start in the Bronx!**



**BCH demonstration at the rodeo**

**Send photos of your equine activities to us at [missoulabch@gmail.com](mailto:missoulabch@gmail.com)!**

## Event calendar

*This is a tentative, draft schedule and is subject to change. Confirmed events will be sent via email from [missoulabch@gmail.com](mailto:missoulabch@gmail.com) when we have more information on trail maintenance projects.*

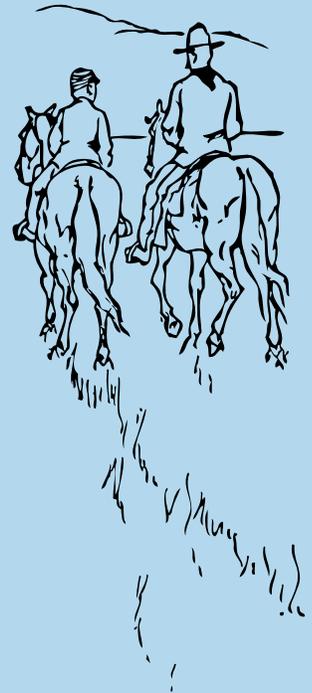
- March 14: Saddle Cleaning at FWP, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- March 27-29: BCH Montana Convention in Bozeman
- March 31: Mules on the Oval at UM, 12 to 1 p.m.
- April 18: Horse Safety Clinic at Basham's Arena
- April 25: Defensive Horsemanship Clinic
- May 2: Montucky Derby Fundraiser for Big Sky Horse Park, 5 p.m., Heritage Hall
- May 16: Mission Mountain BCH Poker Ride in Plains. Email [wildhorseplainsbch@gmail.com](mailto:wildhorseplainsbch@gmail.com) to register.
- May 17: Flower Ride at Dan Harper's
- May 29-31: Blackfoot Clearwater Game Range ride
- June 6: National Trail Days - Brush out Woods Gulch
- June 13: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Ride
- June 18-21: BCH MT Rendezvous at Monture
- Sept. 16: Annual Ice Cream Social and Trivia Night at Smoke's
- Sept. 24-27: Equus International Film Festival and Conference

### Weekly trail rides

Email Ken Brown at [kenbrown1042@gmail.com](mailto:kenbrown1042@gmail.com) to get on his text list. Rides take place on the weekends and will be announced at the beginning of the week.

### And that's not all!

A few events are still being scheduled, including an introductory pack trip, the pannier packing workshop, a work project in Boulder Creek, a pack trip to Clearwater Crossing/Fish Creek, BCHM night at the Western Montana rodeo and more! Keep an eye on your inbox for announcements.



# 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 (club newsletter)? EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

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

State BCH Newsletter? EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ \*\*Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_