



Photo by Kari Schiffman, Bitter Root BCH

Decker Dispatch



BCHMT Gathers at Monture Guard Station

The Back Country Horsemen of Montana had their first summer gathering at the Monture Guard Station August 19th through the 22nd. In the spring of 2021, Smoke Elser suggested we have the campout, since the past two conventions had been cancelled. Smoke felt that having an outdoor gathering would help to build the camaraderie that goes along with having a convention. Plus being outside with plenty of room to spread out would lessen the chance of spreading Covid-19.

The Monture Guard Station is centrally located in Montana and there are several trails to ride in the area. About 50 members brought horses for the weekend and another 20 joined us for dinner on Saturday evening, including Sherry Copeland, the chair of BCHA.

BCHMT vice-chair Wade Murphy gave a clinic focusing on speed control of your horse.

Smoke Elser told us about the history of the Monture area. Smoke packed out of Monture for over 50 years, so he knows the area well.

Dr. Eva-Maria Maggi gave us an update on the Wilderness Policy and Packing class she teaches at the University of Montana. BCHMT offers scholarship money to students who take this class.

Sherry Copeland shared some of her thoughts about BCHA with us and listened to suggestions and ideas from those gathered.

Kathy Hundley, Greg Schatz and Deena Shotzberger were presented the BCHMT Founders Award by Connie Long. Deena was not able to join us.



Smoke Elser, Dr. Eva-Maria Maggi, Sherry Copeland, Greg Schatz, Kathy Hundley and Connie Long. Photos by Dawn Brennan.

OUR PURPOSES

- To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country, roadless back country and wilderness areas.
- To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
- To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
- To educate, encourage and solicit active participation by the general public in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horses and people commensurate with our heritage.
- To foster and encourage formation of new state Back Country Horsemen organizations.
- To seek out opportunities to enhance existing areas of recreation for stock users.

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Learning and Teaching in the Back Country

By Ally Pike, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead

Did you know that horses' eyes take longer than humans' to adjust between light and dark environments? I did some research and it can take from 15 to 45 minutes! I had no idea, but this helps explain that one time I got mowed over in the barn after a night ride. It took me five years, but there's always something new to learn.

I do love learning, but also teaching when I can. So when I was asked about a month ago to help with the BCHMT Youth Packing Camp, I jumped right in. The experience of wilderness on horseback is unparalleled to anything else, in my humble opinion. So to have a few days teaching kids on a camping trip how to pack stock, about horses in camp, and Leave No Trace was such a privilege and joy. The kids were so fun, too. I could rave forever on how fun and (mostly) well-behaved they were. Everyone got along and everyone was ready to work. What a dream team.

Increasing youth involvement in BCHA has been a frequent topic this year as we begin to form a youth committee in BCHMT. We've had a few great panel discussions over the last few years (with some available on record and notes if requested), and we continue to prepare for more. The conversations have ranged from program structure and logistics all the way to updating each other on the newest and coolest words like "cap." Gen Z uses this as a term for lying, and no-cap is not lying. I think? The point being is that we want to build conversations on more ways to teach and facilitate opportunities to learn backcountry riding.

Our world is no doubt having a wild ride through the constant changes and increasing speeds these days. Other conversations we've grazed on have been deeper things like inclusivity and diversity. It's so important to bring these conversations to the table. This helps with making new connections, building



trust, and holding space for everyone to have these opportunities.

In closing, I challenge you to see what youth activities you can get involved in or create for your chapter. It's a crazy world we're living in, but there's always the backcountry.

P.S. I don't want to hear any complaining about "kids these days." The 80's were not normal.

Schedule for chapters' news article submissions

E-mail to: deborah.bcha@gmail.com

Winter Issue: articles due January 5th

Beartooth, Bitter Root, Cabinet, Mission Valley, Three Rivers, Upper Clark Fork, Wild Horse Plains, and convention hosting chapter.

Spring Issue: articles due May 5th

Charlie Russell, East Slope, Flathead, Gallatin, and Judith Basin.

Fall issue: articles due September 5th

Last Chance, Mile High, Missoula, Northwest Montana, Selway-Pintler Wilderness, and Trout Creek.

Letter from the Chair

By Sherri Lionberger, Last Chance Back Country Horsemen
Chair, BCH Montana



I am writing this note after coming home from our State Director's meeting in Deer Lodge today. It was great to see some of you in person and more on the Zoom call. We will continue to use this process to get as many folks to these meetings as possible, and again, thank you to Rich Carl for handling that aspect of our meeting.

It was also very encouraging to hear people talk about their work projects this past summer, and some that are still doing work into October. After a difficult summer in 2020, many chapters have done another great job of helping our land management agencies get much needed work done this year. A big thank you is extended to all, as well as a reminder to get those volunteer hours into John Chepulis as quickly as possible!

The August Monture gathering was a big success, with many of the attendees saying they would like to see this event again next year. The committee did a great job and the

Forest Service would sincerely like to have us back. Some discussion today centered around combining this event with our regional forester pack trip (to run consecutively, not concurrently!), which means we will be looking for dates earlier in the summer. Stay tuned and we will hope to have potential dates at the December meeting.

Fall is here, and after such a hot summer, let alone the smoky summer, this is a great time for being out on the trail – I hope to see you there.

Sherri

Contact Sherri at chair@bchmt.org

In the News

Senate confirms Missoula's Tracy Stone-Manning to lead BLM

Montanan to take the helm of 245 million acres of federal land.

The U.S. Senate voted 50-45 Thursday to approve the nomination of Montanan Tracy Stone-Manning to lead the Bureau of Land Management. In that post, she'll oversee management of 12% of the United States' landmass.

Stone-Manning, of Missoula, previously served as an adviser to Sen. Jon Tester, D-Montana, and as director of the state Department of Environmental Quality under former Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock. After two years in that post, she became Bullock's chief of staff. More recently, she's advised the National Wildlife Federation on conservation policy.

[Read the rest of the story... https://montanafreepress.org/2021/09/30/us-senate-confirms-tracy-stone-manning-to-lead-blm/](https://montanafreepress.org/2021/09/30/us-senate-confirms-tracy-stone-manning-to-lead-blm/)

Horse Camps Occupied by Parties without Stock US Forest Service Update

BCHA coordinated a written response with the American Horse Council responding to the U.S. Forest Service draft whitepaper, "Managing Equestrian Use Sites at Developed Campgrounds." The paper includes recommended best practices for agency field personnel in order to minimize the degree to which parties without stock occupy horse camps. BCHA views the paper as a critical first step toward educating Forest Service field staff, campground hosts and visitors about the needs of equestrians and the lack of ample substitute campsites should parties without stock occupy equine campsites. The issue is a significant concern, as it prevents many backcountry horsemen and women from conducting work parties and accessing national forest trails.

Wildland Fire Information

This site hosts current fire restriction information by area for the state of Montana. Please use this map as a resource to determine activities that may be restricted where you live and recreate in Montana.

<https://www.mtfireinfo.org/>

InciWeb - incident information system

InciWeb is an interagency all-risk incident information management system. The system provides the public a single source of incident related information, and provides a standardized reporting tool for the Public Affairs community.

Check fire status here... <https://inciweb.nwccg.gov/>

Montana Ag Live

Montana Ag Live is a regular call-in information program dealing with agricultural and gardening issues in Montana. Presented by MontanaPBS in association with Montana State University Extension, this program invites experts onto the panel to discuss everything from pasture management, equine health, pesticide use, large-scale agricultural techniques to backyard gardening questions and even which mushroom to pick in the woods.

Tune in Sunday evenings at 6PM on 46.1 or watch online... <https://watch.montanapbs.org/show/montana-ag-live/>

My 2021 highlights. Maybe I am retired...

By Fred Benson, Last Chance Back Country Horsemen

I was lucky enough to retire from full time employment in March of 2020 and was looking forward to a busy summer with horse and mule related hobbies. Unfortunately, those plans changed with Covid-19 and a horse related fall that resulted in five broken ribs. With 2021, I hoped for a new year with more opportunities to have fun and adventures and no serious injuries.

In March and April, several LCBCH members took part in some spring rides in the snow and cold weather. Later in the spring, I started getting my small three-mule pack string in shape, helping fellow Last Chance Back Country Horseman Bob Tomaskie harrow hay fields. Pulling a drag for several hours a day is a great way to limber the animals up. Thank you Bob for helping me experience a three-abreast hitch.

LCBCH also hosted two Montana Conservation Crew (MCC) crew leader training sessions for 15 crew leaders. They had the opportunity to learn about stock and the basics of how to handle a mule. Participants learned how packers arrange and group their gear as well as how many animals it takes for a pack trip. Then they practiced putting the gear they packed on mules, which LCBCH members brought to the training session. The crew leaders liked the training, with crew leaders asking if we could come to Idaho and North Dakota later in the year.

When the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation published their trail crew schedule and packer list, LCBCH jumped at the opportunity to volunteer and help with packing needs. The LCBCH scored three trips and I was fortunate to be part of two of the early trips while other members packed the third trip.

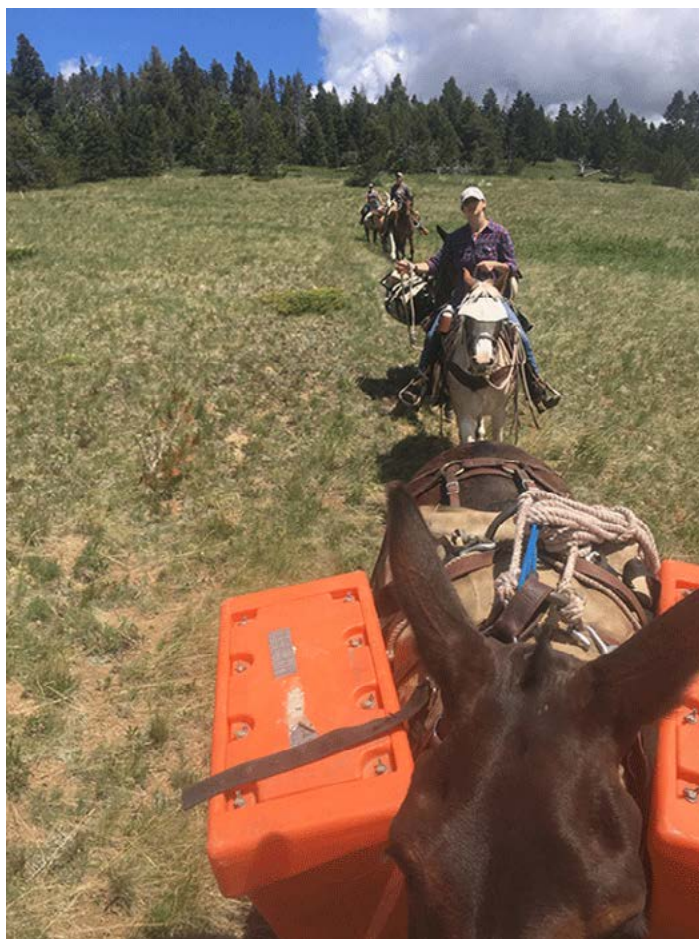
The first trip was into Webb Lake which we scouted ahead for since we had never been there. The Forest Service had already packed in all the bridge planking for the trail crew that we were to pack in. A couple of newer LCBCH members volunteered to help with packing support with Mike Layng providing two pack horses and Nolan and Sheila Wanner as outriders. This was a fairly short trip but it allowed us to get used to each other and the dif-

ferent strengths each brought to the process. We all learned something.

The second trip involved packing a weeds crew into Webb Lake. This was a very light load but very bulky. This was a new experience, transporting liquid chemicals and empty bulky sprayers. Mike L accompanied me to Webb Lake for the pack in while Jordan and Jason Hughley and their two daughters rode shotgun as we made two trips to Webb Lake for the pack out. I had the only pack animals for the pack out. During our in and out trip on Saturday, we did some unplanned trail clearing, and then we made another trip in and out on Sunday in a light rain or strong drizzle.

The last BMWF trip was an unexpected, unplanned call after a packer cancellation. They were without a packer to get a weeds crew in from the Lodgepole trailhead north of Ovanado. After some quick scuttling to recruit help and get things loaded up we were able to help out. This one was unplanned and quick, but we had fun and got to see a lot of new country.

Another pack trip the LCBCH helped with was packing an MCC crew in and out of Nevada Creek - Mountain, just off the Continental Divide Trail, leaving from Marsh Creek. Two of the crew leaders the LCBCH hosted in May were part of the trail crew! It was fun to see how they put to use what we had taught them in May, helping sort the gear and direct their crew around the animals. When we did pack them out, the LCBCH team arrived earlier than expected and the MCC crew weren't quite ready for us. Again, the crew leaders helped direct traffic, gathered



gear and helped pack the panniers for the pack out. Thank you, Mike L, Nolan and Shelia W, Tony and Lyndsay Smith, Sherrie Lionberger, Bud Criner, Clif Caughron, Terry Hutton and Nicole Anderson for being part of this adventure.

Another project the LCBCH participated in was National Trails Day where we split into three different groups to clean and clear several trails in the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Though we didn't get all the planned trails cleared that day members of the group have been slowly chipping away at the rest trying to get them opened.

I am sorry if these (my) highlights miss any work done by others in the LCBCH over the summer. 2021 provided new opportunities that 2020 did not /could not. I have a lot to learn and continue to learn about horse and mule related activities. The friends I made and the shared experiences have been rewarding. I hope that more current and new Back Country Horsemen can be involved in 2022.

Monture Riding Clinic - Riding in Control

By Wade Murphy, Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen

Photos by Dawn Brennan, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead

BCHMT had a very fun time at the Monture gathering in August. It was good to meet a lot of new people from around the state. This was a different crowd than we tend to see at meetings and convention. Over the weekend we set aside some time for education. I led a 10-person clinic on "control". We had great participation and we all learned quite a bit about our animals and ourselves. I thought I would take a few minutes to outline what we covered.

Are you in control of your animal? This is not necessarily a yes or no question. The reality is, our level of control changes as conditions change. The further your animal gets from their comfort zone the more nervous they get. As they get more nervous we become less in control of them.

When I ride my horse in my arena at home he is very comfortable there. This is his home and he has spent many years there and has spent countless hours being ridden in that arena. I have excellent control of him there. When I take him to a new place his prey animal instincts kick in, and my level of control over him decreases.

As Back Country Horsemen, this is our reality. We love to take our animals to new and exciting places. Taking our animals to new places and often away from their barn buddies takes them out of their comfort zone. This often leads to nervous animals. As our control over the animal decreases our ability to ride safely also decreases.

One way of getting our animals back into their comfort zone is by having them perform exercises that they are familiar with. When you perform simple exercises that your animal is good at, they gain confidence and return to their comfort zone. Your control increases.

Our August clinic was a series of exercises for people to practice at home that can be used at the trailhead or on the trail to stay in control and increase safety. The following is an outline of some of the exercises we practiced. The exercises start simple and build on each other to eventually gain control of the major body parts of the horse.

1. Lateral flexion; simple flexing the head left and right. Our goal is to have the animal flex willingly to the lightest request possible.

2. One rein stop; our goal is to have our animal come to complete stop and relax anytime we flex their head around without any leg pressure.

3. Controlled circle (about 20" radius); our goal is to walk our animals in a simple circle on a loose rein. We want them in control to the left and right, and also going the speed we want. We also introduce controlling the hips. We have them move their hips over off of our leg pressure.

4. Checkerboard exercise; walk the lines on a checkerboard with 90 degree turns. Our goal is to have them walk straight lines and then turn with the lightest pressure possible. We practiced first seat pressure, then leg pressure then follow with rein pressure if needed.

5. Walking lateral flexion; this builds off of step one only at a walk. Our goal is circling with good forward motion with the head flexed either left or right.

6. Vertical flexion; flexing downward at their poll. Our goal is have them flex their head to the lightest pressure. We start at a standstill and progress to a walk, trot, and lope.

7. Transitions; Changing speeds. Our goal is to have our animals quick to change speed as we ask them to. Walk to trot. Trot to walk etc.

8. Backing; we build off of vertical flexion for this. Our goal is to have our animals backup with very light cues.

9. Side pass; we build off of shoulder and hip control exercises to progress to a side pass.

10. Speed control; we practice 3 different speeds of walk, 3 different speeds of trot and a lope. (We skipped the lope at Monture due to the condition of the ground where we were riding).

Our goal is to get our animal to transition to all these different speeds with very light cues.

11. Desensitizing; we introduced our animals to a quad, chain saw, horse clippers, etc. Our goal is to boost their confidence when they encounter scary objects.

This is a brief outline of our Monture clinic. It is hard to squeeze three hours of education into a short article. There are tons of these types of exercises you can do with your animal to build their confidence. I encourage you to do your homework and get your animal comfortable with some simple exercises at home. When you are out on a ride you can do a quick warm up at the trailhead to get them in the right mindset. When you are on the trail and feel their anxiety building you then have some tools in your toolbox to maintain a high level of control.

Ride safe.
Wade



To Picket Or Not To Picket Mules

By Dan Harper, Missoula Back Country Horsemen

In his book, *Give Me Mountains For My Horses*, Tom Reed relates a sad story that brought me back to a specific memory. Tom raised and trained a horse named Grizz. Grizz became his favorite horse, his lead horse. On a pack trip into the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, Grizz was, as usual, picketed with a rope from the front pastern to a steel picket pin, pounded into the ground. Some of the other horses on the trip were hobbled and some were loose. The herd always kept close to where the lead horse was picketed. For reasons unknown, the herd spooked and bolted across the meadow with Grizz following. Unfortunately when Grizz hit the end of the picket rope, the pin pulled out of the ground. The rope, under great tension, shot the pin like a guided missile, impaling the horse and penetrating into the chest. He was dead in ten minutes.

I had a similar experience with a picket pin and a horse. The mare, who had been trained on the picket, was on one side of the picket circle when the other horses and mules charged by. By the time she was on the other side of the circle, she was hitting a full gallop. I watched in horror as the rope stretched and tightened. I expected her to be thrown on her back. Instead the pin shot out of the dirt and like an arrow, pierced the skin on her rib cage and bounced out, leaving the picket pin hanging, laced through three inches of skin. That was the last time I picketed a horse.

Mules tend to stay close to the dominate lead horse or mule both in the pasture and in camp. An advantage of picketing is that the lead horse or mule is allowed to graze while keeping the other mules close by. Depending on herd dynamics, the non-picketed stock may need to be hobbled. In any case the picketed lead horse or mule will provide a ride to round up the rest of the herd if necessary.

Here are some thoughts on how to safely picket a mule or horse. A 20-30 foot 3/8 or 1/2 inch synthetic rope works well. In order to keep the hoof from becoming entangled with loose rope, the last 8 to 10 feet should be a chain or alternatively the rope can be threaded through a length of garden



Side line hobble, rope with last 10 feet in garden hose and picket pin

hose. A strong steel picket pin with a point on one end and a swivel on the top works best in most situations. A padded picket hobble and a side line hobble will also be needed.

Good equipment is necessary, but good training is more important. In a confined area, use a soft rope to teach the mule to easily give each foot to pressure. With a loop of rope around the pastern, pull and release until the mule easily yields to pressure. Repeat for each foot. Next, again in a confined area like a round pen, attach the side line hobble, back and front on the same side. Allow plenty of time for the animal to become accustomed to moving about in the hobble. Repeat this procedure for several days to ensure that the mule is doing well with the side line hobble. Next, attach the picket hobble to the hind leg next to the side line hobble. Using the side line hobble in conjunction with the picket helps keep a startled animal from getting up too much of a head of steam before hitting the end of the line. Attaching the picket to the hind leg keeps the leg from being pulled out from under the mule in an emergency. The picket pin must be securely in the ground. Pull the line to be sure that the horse gives to pres-

sure. Limit the amount of line to 12 feet or so at first and always lead the mule to the end of line before releasing him to ensure that he understands that he is constrained. Attach the rope to the picket swivel with a quick release knot that won't jam.

Clear the circle encompassed by the picket line of all debris and snags. The risk of problems increases if other horses and mules not part of your herd are present in the meadow. Move the picket often to avoid overgrazing. At first limit the picket rope to about 20 feet. At night, high-line the mule for safety. Always start the training at home and progress to a mountain meadow when the mule is comfortable on the picket.

To picket or not to picket depends on the horse's or mule's temperament, good equipment and training. Also, a suitable area for the picket is necessary.

Good luck with your stock in the mountains. Remember, "It is better to ride a thin mule than to chase a fat one."

SPWBCH IS TOOLING UP

By Duane Krowen, Selway-Pintler Wilderness Back Country Horsemen

When we plan trail projects, a big part of our planning involves deciding what tools will be needed for the projects, and in the case of crosscuts and chainsaws, have qualified people to use them. Sawing and moving logs off the trail is usually the biggest part of the work. Bringing the right tools will make the job easier and allow us to get the most done with the time we have and make the work more enjoyable.

For a chainsaw, I prefer to use one big enough to get the job done, but not so heavy that I get worn out carrying it down the trail. Unless it is a long way between logs, we often will just walk the trail cutting logs ahead of someone else in the club who will pony my riding mule, the tool mule, and other riding stock, so we don't need to tie up or walk back to our stock. I used a Stihl 180 for a few years and liked it. After the 180 quit oiling last year, my repair shop told me fixing it would cost half the price of a new one. I replaced it with a 210 as they didn't have a 180 in stock. I am happy with the new saw. It has more power and is only a pound or two heavier.

I also have used an electric chainsaw on projects. Electric saws will do a lot of work and have some advantages and disadvantages. The saw I used is an 80-volt Kobalt, a Lowes product. I bought it because I have several other tools that use the same battery. It has an 18-inch bar, and I have cut logs that used the whole bar. The new electric saws are not wimpy. They are quieter and you only need to push a button or two to start them. If your local Forest Service approves, they may be used after one P.M. during hoot owl conditions. The down side is you should have two or three batteries with you. I have five that fit my saw and have used all of them on days when we have cut 50-100 logs in a burn area with lots of down timber.

Our club has also bought a set of Katanaboy folding saws for work in Wilderness areas. If you aren't using these, you need to check them out. They come in three sizes, the 500, the 650 and the 1000 (in millimeters). The 500 can do the work of a saddle saw and can cut a log up to 10 or 12 inches. I carry one whenever I trail ride. The 650 is a little larger and has a more aggressive tooth

pattern. The 1000 has a blade a full meter long. It can be used to cut logs up to three feet in diameter or more.

We still carry a New Zealand crosscut, but don't use it as much as we did before. These new saws are quicker and easier to take out, so the crosscut is only for the biggest logs. I have often thought my worst nightmare would be for my horse or mule to do the trail tango when a crosscut was halfway out of the scabbard. Because they are lighter and have a longer handle, Katanaboy saws are easier to use cutting up from the bottom of a log when the saw starts to bind.

We don't need to use wedges as much as we used to. A wedge can also be placed sooner than with a crosscut because the Katanaboy blade is not as wide. Katanaboy saws will also be used in tighter spots than crosscuts. The long handle will reach logs shoulder height or higher. The saws come with a nylon case, but we have had Young Creek Saddlery make leather scabbards that are more convenient for carrying on a saddle.

Happy Trails.





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If you would like to join us, please contact a chapter in your area.

Find more information on our website:
www.bchmt.org

