

Decker Dispatch



Cabinet Back Country Horsemen, Montana Wilderness Association, Kootenai National Forest and Lincoln County Resource Advisory Committee Team Up to Open Backlog Trails 2020-2022.

By Deena Shotzberger, Cabinet Back Country Horsemen

Photo by Kari Schiffman, Bitter Root BCH

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.



Cabinet Back Country Horsemen Volunteer Clearing the Silver Butte Creek Trail

In 2019, Cabinet Back Country Horsemen submitted a proposal to the Lincoln Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) to fund a two-person Forest Service crew to work with volunteer partners to clear 100-150 miles of back log trails on Libby Ranger District. Read the complete article on page 11.

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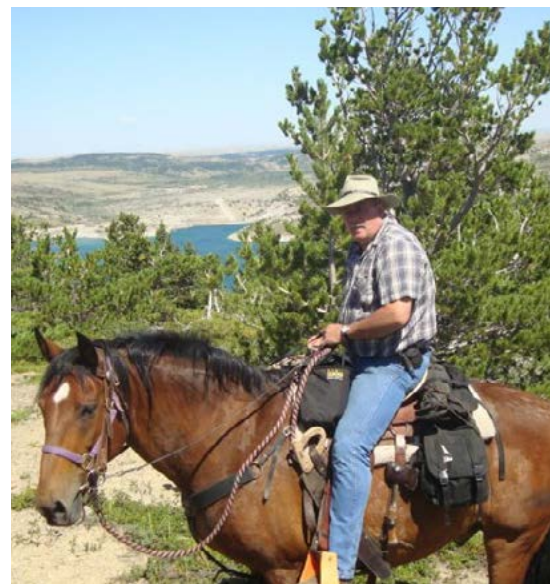
Richard "Fred" Fitzpatrick

Richard Allen Fitzpatrick, lovingly known as Fred by his friends and fellow Back Country Horsemen, passed away at the age of 64 on Monday, October 18, 2021.

Rich was born on May 24, 1957, in Conrad, to Barbara Wagner Fitzpatrick and Gerald Fitzpatrick. He graduated from Valier Public Schools in 1975. After high school, Rich went to work for John Greytak, of First Continental Corporation. He originally worked on irrigation pivots, but later moved to the farm crew, which he preferred. He was operating tractors, trucks, combines, performing farm equipment maintenance, mechanic work, and welding. Fred remained there for several years, working thousands of acres of First Continental lands throughout the state. He started work at the Kingsbury Ranch, west of Valier, then traveled to Fly Creek, between Billings and Hardin, Snowy Mountains, north of Lavina, and Briggs Ranch in Dell, MT. After a few years Fred went to work for Big K Farm, a contract farming corporation, out of Canada, that took over farming operations for John Greytak.

In 1979, Rich moved back to Valier to help with the family mechanic business at Fitz Repair. Working along his dad, Gary, and his brother, Peter, they grew a successful business. They were instrumental in transitioning the business beyond auto body and engine repair to a machine shop, filling a need in the farming community. Rich maintained the buses for Valier Public Schools, and took on the role of bus driver, safely transporting area farm kids to and from school.

Rich lived life to the fullest. He loved hunting, camping, the mountains, cooking, and baking, especially delicious pies, which were always a work of art. Most importantly, Fred loved spending time with his family and



friends. He was the ultimate family man and a great friend. He always made himself available whenever called upon.

He had a true love for horses and the outdoors, so he joined East Slope Back Country Horsemen in 1998, in which he was president for several years. When he was not acting as president, he was secretary, treasurer, or vice president, along with state treasurer of the group for several years. The volunteer role of keeping trails cleared in the Bob Marshall Wilderness for others to enjoy was his passion and the friends he made there were paramount.

His life will forever be cherished in the lives of his family and friends, devoted niece, Kelsey (Kord) Ramberg; nephew, Adam Fitzpatrick; great nephews, Nash and Crew Ramberg; aunt, Helene Gartner; uncle, David Fitzpatrick; numerous cousins and friends.

Rich is preceded in death by parents, Gerald and Barbara Fitzpatrick; brother, Peter Fitzpatrick; numerous aunts and uncles.

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 hope all had a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year to you as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to write about the officers and committee chairs for this great organization. It does take individuals to step up for these positions, but we operate at your behest. Our next state directors meeting and convention will be in Dillon in early March and there are several positions that will need to be filled.

My position, the vice chair position and the treasurer's position are all termed out at two years. There have been many times in the past where a newly elected treasurer has served for two years, then moved into vice chair for two years, and then on to the chair for two years, but there is nothing in the constitution that requires that.

If you have an interest in a position, but aren't comfortable being an officer for six years, please step up and know that isn't required! The senior director for each chapter represents you on the nominating committee, so talk with them if you are interested.

I also just received the final membership numbers from Matt for 2021, and we are down slightly with a loss of five

percent. These last couple years have indeed been difficult with the pandemic. Chapters may need to reach out to past members (as well as recruiting new), to engage in our mission; it is my hope that we can turn these numbers around and make gains back in 2022.

Several of our members (Wade Murphy, Brad Pollman and Henry Gottardi) have been working on a region-wide agreement with the Forest Service to hopefully make our paperwork lives a bit simpler. Now is the time to reach out and start working with our FS and BLM partners to set up our work programs for the summer. With our current frigid temperatures, this is the season for planning and meetings!

Cheers to all of you for the best in 2022.

Sherri

Contact Sherri at chair@bchmt.org

In the News

Former FWP director nominated to head U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Submitted by Chuck Miller, Issues Committee Chair

HELENA — Martha Williams, the former director of Montana's Fish, Wildlife & Parks, has been nominated by President Joe Biden to be the new director of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). She has been serving as principal deputy director for USFWS since January of 2020.

Williams was appointed to head FWP by former Governor Steve Bullock and served as director from 2017-2020. She was the first woman to head the department.

Prior to heading FWP, she taught at the Alexander Blewett III School of Law at the University of Montana, working for a time as a solicitor at the U.S. Department of Interior, and was a lawyer at FWP from 1998 to 2011.

Williams will need confirmation from the U.S. Senate before she can assume the role of director.

USFWS is within the United States Department of the Interior dedicated to the management of fish, wildlife, and natural habitats.

Helena-Lewis and Clark Forest Management Plan Completed

Bill Avey, the Forest Supervisor for the Helena—Lewis and Clark National Forest, signed the record of decision (ROD) for the Helena—Lewis and Clark National Forest 2021 Land Management Plan (the Plan). The Plan will become effective 30 days after the publication of the notice of plan approval in the Federal Register.

To view the final record of decision, final environmental impact statement, the land management plan, and other related documents, please visit the Helena - Lewis and Clark National Forest website .

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/hlc/forest-planrevision

Recommended wilderness areas, recreation areas, wood products and a shift in managing big game habitat highlight the final forest plan.

The U.S. Forest Service's plan for the 2.9-million-acre forest is expected to drive management for the next 15 years. The plan in and of itself does not make decisions on the ground, but sets parameters for those decisions, such as where and how much timber

may be harvested or which areas will be managed for primitive recreation. The plan also sets metrics for assessing the landscape, such as how the agency will analyze standards and guidelines for wildlife habitat.

Forest Plans for Flathead, Helena, Lewis & Clark, Beaverhead-Deer Lodge, and Kootenai have been completed in the last few years. The Custer-Gallatin Plan will probably be out by January; the Lolo and Bitterroot are not started yet but will probably start in 2023.

Attention Sawyers and Photographers

Correct safety gear needs to be worn and no pictures will be printed without it. Here is the list of personal protective equipment (PPE) required:

Chain saw: hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, gloves, long sleeve shirt, long pants, chaps, and boots.

Crosscut: hard hat, safety glasses, gloves, long sleeve shirt, long pants, and boots.

Narrow Escape

By Robin Morris, Beartooth Back Country Horsemen

Given the miles I have ridden my mule, Beau, it was a question of when something would happen. Until September 2, 2019, we had never experienced what could have been a life-threatening situation.

On that day, I was riding with Connie LeHocky, a member of the Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen. Wanting to squeeze in one more camping trip before the weather changed, we headed to the Dead Indian Trail, a place neither of us had ridden before. The trailhead is north of Cody, Wyoming on the Chief Joseph Scenic Highway.

After parking and settling in, we took off for a 16-mile ride. Eight miles in, the trail was washed out from spring and summer rains. I stepped off Beau to climb up and try to locate a “go-around.” He followed me.

As it was high, you could not see what was on top until you were there. Beau leapt up and landed in an area that was corrugated with solid strips of land and deep mud bogs in between. I quickly realized we would not be taking this loop and while trying to get him turned around he landed in a deeper bog - without the solid strips. He was facing uphill, buried in mud from his shoulders to his tail with all four legs completely submerged. The only part of Beau on solid ground was from his neck up.

Connie had dismounted below while I scouted out our options. I called for her to take Beau’s lead rope so I could push and motivate from behind.



He made several attempts before she got there. I could tell it would take significant effort on his part to get out of this.

We were eight miles from camp, in the Wilderness - alone. I removed his crupper and bridle and handed over the lead rope. He was calm and simply looked at me as if to say, “don’t worry.” I just kept telling him, “You’ve got this, Beau.”

He made little progress and it appeared that he was sinking even deeper. The vision of his tail laying on top of the mud was horrible. After three or four failed attempts, we allowed him to rest for a few moments.

Then I increased the pressure and he bounded out in his final two attempts. I was so proud of his determination, sheer sense of preservation and athleticism. He dug deep for this win. Beau and I were able to pull things together, without panicking, by focusing

on the task at hand - getting him to safety.

Back at camp, I spent 45 minutes in the creek with Beau sponging him off, loving him, cleaning my tack, boots - everything, and simply basking in his company, safely by my side. Fortunately, he was no worse for the wear and had but one tiny scrape on one of his legs. He functioned as if nothing significant had happened.

What did I learn? Trails wash out and need to be fully assessed before allowing our beloved trail partners to follow us. I naively thought there would be solid footing above the washout.

The image of Beau immersed in that mud bog will stay with me forever. The following day Beau was no worse for the wear. We were able to ride 28 miles of beautiful country - but looked at “mud” in a different light. Of course, Connie still insisted on Beau taking the lead where mud was involved.

Attention All Chapters

By Wade Murphy, BCHMT Vice-Chairman

A few of the directors of BCHMT have been working with Region 1 Forest Service personnel to modify the way we do our volunteer work agreements. We are very close to finalizing the new process, so I suggest you hold off if you are preparing to put your 2022 work agreement in place. It looks like it will be similar but much easier than our current process. When it is finalized we will send notifications to all chapter leaders. Here are the highlights:

- The Regional Forester and the BCHMT State Chairman will sign one volunteer agreement (301A)

for all the chapters.

- The statewide agreement will allow BCHMT members to be covered anywhere in Region 1.
- Each chapter will work with the local Forest contact, as we have been doing, to work out their plans and projects. Any local arrangements you have been making with your local ranger district can continue as they have in the past.
- Each chapter is responsible for having any member doing work sign the roster (301B) one time each year before the member does any

work.

- Project leaders will still check in with the proper Forest contact prior to doing work projects.
- Incidental trail clearing such as clearing down trees found on a pleasure ride will be covered under the agreement.
- Job hazard analysis will still be done for each work project.

Stay tuned. There will be more information coming soon. It is fully expected that this new agreement will be in place for all chapters for the 2022 field season.

A New Trail Tool

By Greg Schatz, Youth Committee Chair, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead

All too often I hear old people saying that young people never get off of their phones. Having grown up during the era of party lines and phones being attached to the wall, sometimes it's hard to understand the fascination with cell phones. One day I asked my young friends what all they have on their phones and it was a real eye opener for me.

Of course there is the standard taking pictures, I asked a young friend to take some pictures at a packing clinic with my phone. I was expecting six or eight pictures, I guess I should have said something because by the time she was done she had taken nearly a hundred pictures and they were really good. Just a difference of perspective really. I remember the days when you had to pay for film and pay for each print; now it costs nothing. I have had young people take pictures of me while I'm man-tying or loading stock, they want to

make sure they can recall how to do it when they get home.

The next time you have your phone out, check out "AllTrails". It is an app with over 200,000 trails mapped. There is everything from trails in city parks to trails in the most rugged backcountry. Now your comment is going to be "where I ride there isn't any cell service". You're right, that's why my young friends will download the map onto their phone and they're set. Another thing they'll do is use [Alltrails](#) for research and put notes on their paper maps. I am a map and compass user and probably always will be. Funny thing, when we get to a trail intersection and need to figure out which way to go, my young friends have their phone out and have decided which direction while I'm still trying to get my map unfolded.



Danaher Meadow, Bob Marshall Wilderness, Montana

Did you know that the longest operating single line phone system in the US is along a forty-mile section of the South Fork of the Flathead River in the Bob Marshall Wilderness? The phone system was started in about 1920 and at one time there were 200 stations tied together throughout the backcountry of Northwest Montana.

Bitter Root BCH completes maintenance on historic horse camp

By Bonnie Morgan, Project Leader and Training Chairperson

Ten BRBCH members and four Forest Service personnel replaced all 11 fire rings at the historic Rock Creek Horse Camp at Lake Como (located south of Hamilton, MT) on September 16, 2021. Member Bill Slemph used his Skid Steer to yank out the old fire rings. The sites were then cleaned, and new rings were placed a few inches into the ground, pinned down, and leveled. Rocks were placed on the ground inside the ring. Members mixed cement, shoveled it over the rocks in each ring, then smoothed the top of the cement, making the fire rings easier to clean in the future.

Another crew combed the campground for "micro trash": wrapper ends, bottle caps, cigarette butts and more. Bill again used his Skid Steer to load

the old fire rings onto a Forest Service trailer so rings in salvageable condition could be refurbished and installed in more primitive campgrounds. This was a Great American Outdoor Act project, and Dan Hottle, press officer for the USFS Northern Region, produced a short video documentary of the completed project.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRTCgxT90nY&authuser=0>



Clockwise:
Bill Slemph removed the old fire rings.
Crew members level a new fire ring before pouring cement.
Project leader Bonnie Morgan mixes cement.

Safety Moment

Does your horse see you as its leader?

Does your horse see you as its leader? (When I use the word “horse” that includes their long eared cousins.) This is a very important question when it comes to safety.

I’m sure you know quite well that horses have very strong herd instincts. When you turn animals out together, it is in their deepest instinct to establish a pecking order. They have a strong need to know who the leader of the herd is. It is literally a matter of life or death to them. When the “big bad wolf” comes, they need to know who to follow to safety.

This pecking order is easy to observe. Simply throw five piles of hay out to five horses and sit back and see who the leader is. More accurately you can watch and see the whole pecking order from one to five because even number four in line is the leader of number five.

Sometimes the process of establishing a pecking order can be quite violent with kicking, biting and lots of sparring. In the end the leader is the one that can get the other horses to move their feet.

The important thing to note is that horses are not afraid of their leader. They are actually comforted knowing that they have a strong leader to follow to keep them safe. Leaders can change over time. As older horses weaken or get injured and younger horses grow stronger the herd dynamics can quickly change. That is why they always seem to be trying to figure out who the leader is.

So back to my original question, does your horse see you as its leader? Here is an easy test. From the ground, can you easily move her feet in all directions? When you ask her to move her hips or shoulders over, is she willing and responsive or does she just ignore you?

When you ask him to back up, does he back with urgency or does he resist? When you ask him to move does he pin his ears at you? When your horse sees you as her leader she will easily move

her feet for you and it will be easy to get some energy into her motion.

When your horse is not sure if you are its leader they will be challenging you. They will resist moving their feet. They might pin their ears in resistance. They might even get pushy or aggressive with you to get you to move your feet attempting to prove that they are in charge.

Establishing the leadership role is crucial to horsemanship safety. This is the first step in getting your animal to trust you and to be a willing partner.

Leadership is first established on the ground and then transfers into the saddle. If you want a calm, confident, willing partner you must first be the leader. If you fail to establish your leadership you will likely have a nervous, spooky, uncooperative animal. They simply don’t know if they can trust you to keep them safe.

If you want a calm animal you have to lead with kindness. Always try to get your animals to move with the lightest cues and then ramp up your pressure as necessary. Your mission is to establish trust and confidence. If you are always yelling, whipping and chasing your animals you will only make them more afraid of you. If you lead with kindness and light pressure you will develop a safe, quiet partner.

As we enter winter a lot of our animals will be mostly left alone for the next few months. I like to use this time to constantly remind my animals that I am their leader. I regularly walk among them and move their feet. I put two fingers on their nose and back them a few steps and then quietly rub their neck. I ask them to move their hips or shoulders and reward with a rub. At feeding time, instead of letting them get pushy, I back them up and make them wait a minute or so before they get to eat. I

By Wade Murphy,
Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen
Vice-Chairman, BCH Montana



love the results of this. They crave this type of leadership and are comforted by it. This leads to calm, quiet, cooperative and most importantly safe animals. If you are not sure how to do this type of groundwork, find a trainer or mentor that can help you out. Choose your mentors wisely.

One last thought about leadership is that leadership is not transferable. Just because you are your horse’s leader does not mean that the horse will see your spouse, kids, or friends as leader. Most of the time they will challenge this new person to see if they are worthy to be trusted. It can be frustrating to see your well trained animal test a new person. Each and every person that interacts with an animal needs to establish leadership. Remember it is a matter of life or death to a horse to know who the leader is in your herd of two. Make sure they have no doubts.

Safe and happy trails.

Wade

A Year in Review of the Three Rivers Chapter, Back Country Horsemen

By Graeme McDougal

The year started slowly because of the pandemic; however, business must go on. The first in-person meeting was held in February with new officers being seated. Bev McDougal is our new chairwoman, Jamie Hollifield is the vice chairman, Linda Hamrock is our secretary and Linda Hollifield is our treasurer. Our state directors are Kathy Allard and newly appointed Graeme McDougal. Bobbie Mussard is our alternate state director.

We had various programs after the business meetings. One of these was weed identification put on by the folks from the Beaverhead County Weed District. That was followed by a back country weed spraying clinic put on by the weed crew from the Wisdom and Ennis ranger districts. Another program was Bear Aware that was done by the folks from People and Carnivores. The BLM weed coordinator put on a very interesting clinic about SPOT and InReach devices. The members were not aware of these devices' capabilities!

Numerous rides were scheduled. The first was Trail Bossed by Melissa Owen around Henneberry Ridge followed by an ice cream social. Thank you, Jim and Melissa. Another ride was to Seymour Lake in the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. Several other rides were cancelled due to heat and all the smoke. Between the smoke and the drought, it was a difficult summer.

The Chapter did pull off some very

good programs, however. The first was a Horse-Bike Clinic put together by Clark Kinney. It went very well and the horses and riders were better off for it. Thank you to Madison County for allowing us to use your rodeo arena. Ban-nack Days came and the Chapter did a Packing Clinic. We demonstrated packing with the sawbuck saddle and panniers and also the Decker saddle and slinging loads. Bev was at the Hounds Tongue weed pull at Poindexter Slough. Bev and Graeme, Jamie and Linda and Melissa were at Dillon History Days doing a packing demo. Member Charlie O'Leary was busy with Wild Montana installing a new hitch rail at the O'Dell trailhead in the West Pioneer Mountains. Charlie O'Leary and Graeme McDougal packed in a Wild Montana trail maintenance crew to Lake Abundance in the East Pioneer Mountains returning a week later to pack them out. Our annual Dutch Oven Cook Off was the last event of the fall at Jim and Melissa's. The results were fantastic for those of us who enjoy good food. Mark and Renee Sant were declared Dessert Winners and Bev, in her first effort, was declared the Entree Winner. No Christmas Party this year due to Covid-19 and other scheduling conflicts.

As the year progressed, more and more time was spent getting ready to host the State BCH convention. Few of the chapter's current members have any experience in this endeavor so we

have been very busy learning the ropes and getting things accomplished. We are looking forward to seeing everyone in Dillon, March 11-13, 2022.

We are looking forward to a new year, hopefully with a lot more moisture and a lot less smoke. Hope to see you on the trail!

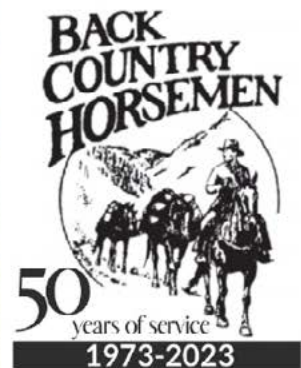
A big thank you to our 2021 summer season BCHMT packers!



By Sally Ferguson, Executive Director, Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation

A big thank you to Ed Duggan, John Duggan, Julie Schram, Maddy Atkins, Joe Kirkland, Dan Brandborg, Gene Merrell, and Dan and Leslie Maiyo, who packed for the SBFC High Lake #303 and Blodgett Trails project and the SBFC St. Mary Lookout Volunteer program in the 2021 season.

We couldn't have accomplished all we did without your generosity and help. You have been essential to preserving and maintaining these precious and wild places. We are so grateful for you and your skills, mules, horses, energy, enthusiasm, and passion for wild places! Thank you for a wonderful season! Cheers to Montana BCHA!



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, April 15, 2023
Majestic Arena, Kalispell MT

A 50th Anniversary Dinner with auctions, raffles, and entertainment

Stay tuned for more info online, Facebook, and in future newsletters

Putting on a Ride

Cindy Ray, Terry Collins, Jean Nemeth, Lisa Read, John Errecart, Sue and Irv Walker; Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen

Whether a fun ride, steak ride, poker ride, scrabble ride or any other number of rides where the public is invited to attend, there's a bunch of planning that needs to go on long before the event date to ensure the ride is safe and enjoyable for the participants.

The Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen have been putting on a poker ride for over ten years (2020 excluded of course). Rides open to the public are an excellent way to meet new folks, provide information about Back Country Horsemen, perhaps recruit some new members, and maybe even generate some funds. In the past we used these funds for a variety of uses such as furnishing a Forest Service cabin rental lookout, helping to fund our flat/broken tire and fuel reimbursement program, and donation to other organizations such as the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation.

Over the course of the years we've been putting on our ride, participation has varied from 30 riders to over 150 riders. Prior to Covid-19 we were hitting our maximum of 150 riders and in 2021 rebounded to around 75 riders. Our intent in this article is to provide somewhat of a checklist for those folks thinking about hosting a ride or even for those who may already host a ride.

Time of year: We've found the most success for participation, both within our chapter and the public, to be in the spring. Folks are eager to get out on their stock, weather is usually favorable for riding, it's a bit early for mountain trail clearing, and it's not fire season.

The Ride Route: We try to design the loop route for a novice rider on a horse that hasn't been used much prior to the ride. Typically we strive for a 10+ mile route using roads that are closed yearlong to motorized use, like old skid trails and cow trails on relatively gentle and open terrain.

Venue: Without a doubt, in our neck of the woods (NW Montana), an accessible, open flat that provides parking for 50-60 trucks with trailers is the limiting factor on where we can host a ride. Good access, be it paved or maintained gravel roads to the site, is key for repeat, year-after-year, participants.

Camping at the site or nearby on public lands is something folks will be asking about as well.

Landowner Permission/Permits: It should go without saying that landowner permission must be obtained before much effort is put into the ride. An in-person visit to landowners with a thorough explanation of the ride, their potential liability (see insurance topic) and what impacts to expect to their property is the best approach to obtaining permission. Large landowners, such as Weyerhaeuser or Green Diamond Resource, may require a permit to be obtained through their company. Public land management agencies, such as the Forest Service or State Department of Natural Resources (DNRC), will require an application for a special use permit. Our permit through the DNRC took several months to obtain at a cost of \$325 in 2020.

Insurance: Worthwhile protection for all hosting parties involved. Though participants sign a liability waiver when registering for the ride event insurance is added peace-of-mind for our chapter and the landowners involved. Our \$300 event insurance, which covers the chapter and all participating landowners, is obtained from the Allen Financial Insurance Group and is written for one million dollars.

Advertisement: Social media (Facebook, BCH webpage, Craigslist, local newspapers, etc.) and posters are an ideal method to inform folks of your upcoming event. Advertisements must contain the usual who, what, where and when information, along with any restrictions such as no dogs on the trail, no stallions, first and last riders out, etc.

Registration: Providing participants the opportunity to pre-registration is definitely the way to go. Pre-registration information should be included in any advertisement along with contact information. Our registrar uses a spreadsheet including the date of receipt (important when getting close to the maximum riders), name, address, liability waiver status, number of prepaid poker hands and payment status. A team staffing the registration table the day of the event allows participants to



Trail Ride Posting. Along with the ribbons and arrows painted on the ground directional posters are also placed when there's a change in direction.

check in, pick up and place their name on their card tally sheet, purchase additional poker hands, purchase 50/50 tickets, and ask questions. A printout of the preregistered participants and a folder with their registration form helps the process go smoothly.

Course Identification: A cleared and well-marked route is crucial to the enjoyment of the riders. It typically takes our chapter four outings to get everything cleared, flagged, posted, and painted so the event riders can follow along the route without thinking twice about which way to go. Simple things, such as keeping the flagline on one side of the route, making flags intervisible (we strive for the riders to be able to see two flags in front of them at all times), flagging on the outside of the route at intersections, installing signs with arrows on them and arrows painted on the ground all make the route effortless to follow for the participants. For consistency we use pink or pink with black to identify the route. We hang pink & black candy striped flagging (ribbon) to mark the route and at sharp turns we place black on pink directional signs on wooden stakes driven into the ground and arrows painted on the ground using pink landscaping paint.

EMS/Sheriff Office/Communications: Without planning, an injury to a participant or someone's stock has the potential to end very poorly. Rider safety is first and foremost in our minds. We

reach out to the local Sheriff's department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to inform them of our ride including the date, times, location, route, and number of participants. We attend the local monthly EMS meeting prior to our event and share with them a map and all our information about the ride. In the past we have visited the on-the-ground vehicle access points and helicopter evacuation landing sites (helispots) with them. During the layout phase of the route, roads providing ambulance access are cleared. Gates that are otherwise closed and locked are requested to be unlocked, with the gate remaining closed (dummy locked) the day of the event. Also, the day of the event all EMS access roads and helispots are posted with blue signs on the ground. The blue signs include a directional arrow and label to the predetermined card stations. In 2021 we were fortunate to have two local EMS volunteers staged at the event venue the entire day. Even more fortunately, their services were not needed, but still much appreciated.

Cell coverage is spotty across our route and non-existent at the venue site itself. To relay information from the trail route we use a combination of line-of-sight radios, cell phones and inReach communicators. In the event of an incident requiring aid, an individual is pre-identified to move to known cell service locations and request services via the Sheriff's office. Information regarding the incident is relayed to the person in cell coverage via the line-of-sight radios or inReach. At the end of the day the Sheriff's office and EMS personnel on call are phoned to let them know the event is over and thank them for their attention.

Parking: In order to maximize the available parking space and ensure easy access/egress for everyone, several of our members meet participants as they arrive at the venue and lead them to their parking location. We typically alternate the arriving participants to one of the several parking areas so as not to cause a jam in one location. The parking attendants use 4-wheelers to lead the participants to their location though last year one attendant rode her mule and received multiple compliments for doing so.

Card Stations: Our ride consists

of five card stations with the first and fifth located at the event venue. The remaining three card stations are distributed along the route that has vehicle access and coordinated with EMS access signage. Each station is staffed with at least two event volunteers. One station volunteer records the card(s) drawn by the rider while the other volunteer holds the bag for the ride to draw from or draws from the bag for the rider. Once the cards are drawn they are marked on the rider's score card and the rider proceeds to the next station along the route.

A couple of our station volunteers have modified their card draw to challenge the riders' skills rather than relying only on luck for drawing the desired card. One station is a ping-pong ball toss into red-solo cups (we're thinking this may have come from their college days) and the fifth station back at the venue invites the rider to use a BB gun to shoot the card of their choice by hitting it on the target board.

The ping-pong ball toss uses plywood, (52) solo cups, screws, stapler, and glue. The solo cups are assembled in the shape of a star with each suit of the deck being attached inside the solo cup with staples. Each star point is a different suit so the riders can choose which suit to aim for. Upon arrival at the station, each rider is given a choice to either pick a card from a bag or play the solo cup game. They could also play from horseback or dismount to play. The majority of the riders chose to play the game. In fact, when riders come into view and see the solo cup game, there are cheers as they think it is beer pong. The balls are sterilized between each player. Sue and Irv (station volunteers) had as much fun as the players and got a lot of exercise chasing the balls. Eventually they assembled a backstop with old wood and rocks around the station to prevent runaway balls.

The fifth and last station for the Poker Ride is a BB gun shoot. We use BB or pellet guns. Both are decently accurate, shooting a tight group. Because it is the last station, there is time to set it up while people are riding. But then at the end, there can be bunches of people showing up at once, so we set up two targets. Participants have a choice to shoot the BB gun, or to draw a card out of a bag. If you shoot, the



A venue providing electrical power and cover for the food vendor and musicians helps tremendously.

poker card you get is the result of some skill combined with a bit of luck. Therefore, you have influence on the card you get! Two separate targets are safely distanced from each other so each can be checked at any time during the shoot. The targets are 25' distant from the firing line. The target is 14 inches in diameter, comprised of a full deck of cards arranged in concentric circles. Each card is fanned out (resembling a poker hand sort of) exposing a triangle with approximately 1"– 1.5" of the top edge. The bullseye is a joker with about 1.5" diameter exposure. The cards are glued in the center of a large, colorful foam poster board. The targets are attached to a couple five-foot pieces of rebar with a backstop box stuffed with magazines and newspaper mounted directly behind the target on two more pieces of five foot rebar. Additionally, the area behind the targets is kept clear in case of wild shots. The participant steps up to the firing line, is handed a loaded BB gun put on safety, instructed how to take it off safety, told the bullseye is a wild joker meaning if hit they can choose the card they want. After they shoot, the BB gun is handed back to a station manager. Another station manager walks out to check the target front and back exit holes, calls out the card that was hit, and places a small sticky tab over the front and backside exit hole on the target. This guarantees not mixing up people's shots. In case someone gets a "Maggie's drawers,"—also known as completely missing the cards, they get to draw a card. If we are not crowded for time, we allow them a second shot if they wish. Most participants are optimistic about shooting for their card, figuring their chances are

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Putting on a Ride

[continued]

better than drawing out of a bag. The station has a friendly, self-competitive nature about it.

Sanitation: We have found a couple port-a-potties to be sufficient even when we've hit our maximum of 150 riders. Along with port-a-potties we also rent a couple portable wash stations and we set up an additional station with soap, water, hand sanitizer, and paper towels near where the food line forms.

Large garbage cans are placed near the eating area and the entire venue is policed for garbage at the end of the day.

Prizes: Obtaining prizes for the event can be stressful if waiting until the last minute. Starting at least five to six months ahead of the event eliminates some of the pressure and results in a better accumulation of prizes that'll be appreciated by the recipients. A budget preapproved by the chapter members helps to set parameters and eliminates overspending. Generally prizes are horse related such as: bridles, reins, halters, lead ropes, grooming tools, knives with leather sheaths, ropes, saddle blankets, buckets, cante bags, pommel bags, western jewelry, etc. Horse/ human emergency First-Aid books/kits and camping items are also good prizes. Prizes do not necessarily need to be new. Members have donated all kinds of lightly used items and some well-worn antique pieces that make for fine barn-art. The prize for the winning hand is usually a custom leatherworked piece by one of our members.

Food/Entertainment/Emcee: Along with a scenic ride, food is one of the key factors that determines whether participants enjoy themselves and return the following year. We've tried several approaches from having our members bring side dishes to augment barbecued burgers cooked by our members, to a fully catered lunch. Over the years we've found our preference is to have a caterer provide the meal. Typically the meal consists of pulled barbecue beef, pork or chicken on a bun, salad, beans, dessert and drinks. We've been very fortunate for the past several years due to one of our members be-

ing willing to cater the meal along with the help of her family.

We've also been very fortunate to have a couple members that are musicians and willing to provide entertainment. Early ride finishers may end up waiting an hour or more while other riders complete the course. During this time they can relax, visit and listen to the live music.

The role of the emcee is to facilitate the schedule of events and read the audience. It gives a focal point for the attendees as well as facilitates communication between the host and the riders, as needed. A speaker system is a must. The position comes into play as the riders are being seated for their meal and are waiting for the rest of the riders to finish the route. It helps with announcements, lost and found, opportunities to thank vendors/land owners/EMS/ and of course the prize distribution. Overall it is another valuable contribution to a successful event.

Sweep: Shortly after the last registered riders leave to ride the route our "Sweep" riders leave the venue to ensure no one has gotten hung-up along the way. As the sweep riders make their way around the route they inform the volunteers manning the card stations they can breakdown and return to the venue. Sweep riders encourage participants to keep moving along so the meal can be served back at the venue.

Course/Venue Cleanup: As a sign of appreciation and respect to the landowners it is critical all directional aids used to designate the route (flagging, posters, landscaping paint, etc.) be removed within a few days of the event. Riders removing the trail markings should also be removing any garbage along the way. Nothing will lead more quickly to a refusal the following year than leaving a mess of any kind on the landowner's property.

Thank you: During the event the emcee is sure to let the participants know who the landowners are and thank them for the privilege of riding and hosting the event on their property. Though it is a small token of our appreciation we also purchase gift cards to a local restaurant for the hosts and mail them with a thank you card. Additionally, we donate a contribution to the local EMS organization as a sign of our appreciation.



Trail Ride Flagging. The ride route is clearly designated using intervisible pink/black flagging (ribbon).



Trail Ride Painting. Arrows painted on the ground using pink landscaping paint directs the riders when there's a change in direction.



EMS Signage. Access for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is posted using blue signs and reviewed on-the-ground with EMS personnel prior to the event.

Teamwork: A successful event doesn't happen without the help of many folks. Just as with this article, it takes a lot of good folks willing to do whatever it takes to provide a fun and safe event that participants will want to come back to year after year.

Cabinet Back Country Horsemen, Montana Wilderness Association (Now Wild Montana), Kootenai National Forest and Lincoln County Resource Advisory Committee Team Up to Open Backlog Trails - 2020-2022.

By Deena Shotzberger, Cabinet Back Country Horsemen

In 2019, Cabinet Back Country Horsemen submitted a proposal to the Lincoln Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) to fund a two-person Forest Service crew to work with volunteer partners to clear 100-150 miles of backlog trails on Libby Ranger District.

The project was approved and the funding was provided through the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. Despite all the challenges of working during the Covid-19 pandemic (including not being able to pick up the two-person Forest Service trail crew), we had a very successful project.

Because the Forest Service could not pick up the two-person trail crew, they used some of the RAC funds to extend the trail crew's season on the adjacent ranger districts to work on this project.

Cabinet Back Country Horsemen and Montana Wilderness Association volunteers worked in partnership with Forest Service trail crews from the Cabinet, Three Rivers, and Libby ranger districts to make significant progress opening backlog trails in 2020.

The highest priority for the project was 46 miles of backlog trails in the Silver Butte Roadless Area at the south end of the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness. The majority of these trails had not been cleared for many years, and nature was rapidly reclaiming these historic access routes. In addition to providing current public access, these historically significant trails were associated with our rich mining history, provided access to a series of historic lookouts, and were some of the first trails or roads in Lincoln County.

By the second week of October 2020, the 46 miles of identified backlog trails in Silver Butte and East Fisher River had been cleared. An additional 20 miles of trail in the Silver Butte drainage and 51 miles of backlog trails in other areas were cleared and now accessible to the public for a total of 117 miles of trail and 4.1 miles of TROAD (trail road) in 2020. Of these accomplishments;



Forest Service trail crew member on the Waloven/Himes Trail.

Cabinet Back Country Horsemen volunteers cleared 22.5 miles, Montana Wilderness Association cleared 13.1 miles, Cabinet Ranger District cleared 20.4 miles, Three Rivers Ranger District cleared 26.6 miles, Libby District fire crew cleared 8.5 miles of access road and trails, and Libby District trail crew cleared 30 miles of backlog trails.

While the 2020 work accomplishments were extraordinary, coordination for this project started long before the volunteers and Forest Service crews started their chainsaws, and will continue through the summer of 2022.

Our 2021 backlog trail accomplishments were far less than we hoped due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns, significant blowdown due to high wind events, and our aging volunteer workforce. We again teamed up with Wild Montana (new brand for Montana Wilderness Association) for our Oscar Miller Work Weekend. Cabinet BCH cleared 12 miles (about 1/3 of our historic average), and Wild Montana volunteers cleared about 6 miles. Libby Ranger District trail crews were as-

signed to fires for a significant portion of the season, so the backlog trail projects and residual funding was deferred to 2022. Cabinet Back Country Horsemen cleared an additional 28 miles of trail that were not associated with the backlog trail project and provided packing support for a Montana Conservation Corps crew working on the Libby District.

Cabinet Back Country Horsemen hope to continue to work on the Backlog Trail Project in 2022, and are once again looking forward to partnering with Wild Montana and the Forest Service.

"This partnership is a great example of what the Trail Stewardship Act of 2016 was intended to accomplish. Having Cabinet Back Country Horsemen take the lead on securing funds and volunteer coordination relieves Forest Service staff of some of the administrative burden of implementing a large trail clearing project. And the added benefits are the partnerships and relationships established through this process."

The Manty

By Seth Carmichael

Last summer, I rediscovered my Wilderness backyard. An undergraduate student at the University of Montana, I took Professor Eva Maggi's Wilderness Policy and Packing class and Wilderness Pack Trip into the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The four weeks taught me a lot about how to pack horses and mules.

It was eye-opening to learn how to wrangle horses, and mantle our cargo with big canvas sheets at Smoke Elser's barn in the Rattlesnake Valley at the north end of Missoula. We also discussed many issues of Wilderness policy such as wildfire, tribal use of Wilderness, and legislative work around our wild public lands.

During the first three weeks of the course, I particularly enjoyed our field trip to the historic Ninemile Remount Depot and Historic Ranger Station of the U.S. Forest Service where we put our roping skills to the test against tin cargo cases.

This course and the packing trip not only developed my understanding of how to legislate and protect wilderness areas, but also sparked nostalgia of playful days in my personal wilderness.

Born and raised in Whitefish, Montana, I always had fun playing war and camping in the wilderness of the Flathead Valley. My brother and I would pretend to be Lewis and Clark exploring

meadows and burying time capsules.

As time went by, I got more serious about school and found more comfort in other activities like reading in my 20 acres woods, making models inside, or watching movies late at night. I never rode a horse.

On the trip in the Bob Marshall, my classmates and I trekked off trail to find hidden lakes to swim which brought us back to our childhoods of skipping rocks, a splashing war, and 'shooting' skeet with rocks. We were hooting and hollering like a boyhood dream.

Out in the wild, folding the manty and tightening the ropes became a fun personal challenge we looked forward to each morning and afternoon when we got to camp. At night, the manties laid over our sleeping bags and kept us warm from the freezing temperatures ... in the middle of July.

On the last day, we rode our horses 20 miles back to the trailhead. An experience I will never forget.

The scholarships provided by the Back Country Horsemen of Montana



and many local chapters made it possible for me to learn how to mantle and pack a mule or horse and experience Wilderness. I'm very thankful for this opportunity to discover the secret way of the manty.

Thank you trail partners!

By Rebecca Powell, Program Director, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation is honored to continue our partnership with the Back Country Horsemen.

In 2021 the BMWF maintained over 540 miles of trails and treated 38 acres of noxious weeds in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

We helped connect hundreds of volunteers with this wild place by putting tools in hand and food in the bellies, none of which could happen without our volunteer packers.

Sixty-two one-way pack trips were supported by 31 individual packers, 24 of which are BCH members! We are grateful for the miles traveled by each and every BCH member to help support our mission.



2022 BCHMT State Convention

Hosted by Three Rivers BCH

We'd like to welcome all the Montana BCH chapters to the 2022 BCHMT State Convention this March 11-13. We are looking forward to seeing everyone in person again and we have some fun things planned, including "Dave's Cowboy Coffee Tent"! We also have a good variety of vendors coming for you to check out during your spare time. UM Western has made some awesome changes to the campus grounds, so you'll enjoy checking out those areas. The students will be on spring break so we will have the campus pretty much to ourselves. Lots of parking!

Raffle Prize Overview by Graeme McDougal

Our first prize will celebrate Montana's Biggest Weekend! The winner will get 4 nights at the Meine Lodge on Flynn Lane south of Dillon (September 1-4). This log house sleeps up to 8 and has 2 full baths, free Wi-Fi, a hot tub and sauna. This is the perfect place to headquarter while you "take in the sights", check out the Beaverhead County Fair and use your tickets to take in the Dillon Jaycee Rodeo. Then on Sunday night you can take in the Labor Day weekend concert, also put on by the Jaycee's with provided tickets.

The next prize will win you and a friend the opportunity to fish one of Montana's Blue Ribbon trout rivers, either the Big Hole or Beaverhead. The float trip for two is provided by Dillon's premier fly shop, Frontier Anglers. They have been located in Dillon and providing unsurpassed fishing experiences for over 40 years. This prize also entails a one night stay for 2 at Lover's Leap Lodging. This facility is within 5 minutes of downtown Dillon and 1.2 miles from public access to the Beaverhead River if you would like a little more fishing. This prize is blocked out for June 20-26, 2022 and reservations need to be made early.

The last prize is for the winter enthusiast. It includes 2 ski passes at Maverick Mountain on the Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest at the head of Grasshopper Creek. At the end of a great day of skiing you will have 2 passes to soak at Elkhorn Hot Springs, which is just up the road about 2 miles. After all the sore muscles have been soaked away there is a room for 2 at the Grasshopper Inn B&B. This prize can either be used late spring 2022 or you can wait for the winter of 2022-2023! What a great way to spend a winters day and night here in Beaverhead County.

The ticket price is 1 ticket for \$5.00 or 5 tickets for \$20.00. Not a bad price for a nice vacation!

These are all great prizes provided by local merchants. Please remember to support the businesses that have supported us with their generous prize donations.

Thank you and See You There!

Three Rivers BCH

BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF MONTANA 2022 STATE CONVENTION

Hosted by Three Rivers BCH

Dillon, MT March 11-13, 2022

In the UM Western Old Main Auditorium, Parking on South Side

CONVENTION PARTICIPANT(S):

BCH Chapter _____

Name _____ Voting Delegate: Yes _____ No _____

Name _____ Voting Delegate: Yes _____ No _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

REGISTRATION FEE: Until February 11 - \$105 After February 11 - \$115

Registration Fee includes registration, seminars, Saturday lunch, Saturday banquet and refreshments at breaks.

Registration fee _____ X Number of Registrations _____ = Total _____

Dinner is Prime Rib Buffet (Vegetarian option will be available)

GUEST(S)/SPOUSE OF PARTICIPANT

Name _____ Name _____

Name _____ Name _____

Guest Tickets:

Saturday Lunch: \$15.00 X Number of Tickets _____ = Total for lunches _____

Saturday Banquet: \$40.00 X Number of Tickets _____ = Total for banquet _____

Total Voting Delegate registration fee + Total Guest(s)/Spouse fees = Total due _____

Make check payable to 3RBCH. Mail completed form and payment to: Kathy Allard, 23385 Hwy 278, Dillon, MT, 59725

PAYMENT DETAILS: Total Paid: \$ _____ Check # _____

All registrations must be received by February 23, 2022

LODGING: (Blocked Rooms expire February 11, 2022, blocks are under Three Rivers BCH)

Fairbridge Inn Express (Block) 683-3636

Quality Inn (Block) 683-6831

Paradise Inn (Block) 683-4214

Southside RV near college 683-2244

Beaverhead Lodge (Block) 683-5555

Countryside RV 683-9860

Super 8 (Block) 406-988-0908

Beaverhead River RV 855-683-2749

Sundowner Motel (Block) 683-2375

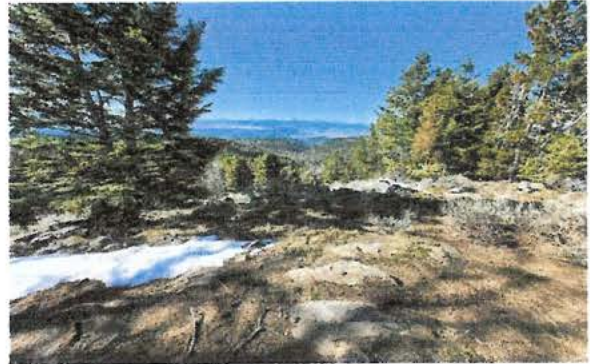
Dillon Motorcoach RV 660-1927

Bring a clip board as our meeting will be held in the auditorium and there are no tables.

For further information contact Kathy Allard (406)660-2305 (text or call).

2022 BCH of MT State Convention

Photo Contest March 11-13, 2022



Welcome and Thank You for entering your photo in our annual contest. Following are the contest guidelines. Please note that the convention attendees will decide the winner.

* Register your photo Friday afternoon or Saturday morning before 9:00 AM

* Photo contest will have 5 (five) categories. Members are limited to 2 (two) entries in each category.

* Categories

1-Stock & Wildlife: Horses, Dogs, Cats, etc.

2-Montana Landscape: Scenery, Mountains, Lakes, etc.

3-Kids Old & Young: People Young, Old, Not So Old

4-Back Country Horsemen at Work: Work Projects, Club Projects, Activities

5-Humorous: Comical, Funny, Makes you smile

Photos are to be taken by amateur photographers only and must be BCH members.

Photo size shall be 5x7 or 8x10 and must be mounted or matted (please, no frames).

Photographer's name, address & email/phone # shall be attached to the back of the photo.

Photos may be mailed to: Kathy Allard, 23385 Hwy 278, Dillon, MT, 59725



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Columbia Falls, MT 59912

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PO Box 949, Libby, MT 59923

Charlie Russell BCH
PO Box 3563, Great Falls, MT 59403

East Slope BCH
PO Box 967, Conrad, MT 59425

BCH of the Flathead
PO Box 1192, Columbia Falls, MT 59912

Gallatin Valley BCH
PO Box 3232, Bozeman, MT 59772

Judith Basin BCH
PO Box 93, Lewistown, MT 59457

Last Chance BCH
PO Box 4008, Helena, MT 59604

Mile High BCH
PO Box 4434, Butte, MT 59702

Mission Valley BCH
PO Box 604, Ronan, MT 59864

BCH of Missoula
PO Box 2121, Missoula, MT 59806

NorthWest Montana BCH
PO Box 23, Kalispell, MT 59903

Selway-Pintler Wilderness BCH
PO Box 88, Hamilton, MT 59840

Three Rivers BCH
PO Box 251, Dillon, MT 59725

Trout Creek BCH
PO Box 1435, Trout Creek, MT 59874

Upper Clark Fork BCH
PO Box 725, Deerlodge, MT 59722

Wild Horse Plains BCH
PO Box 640, Plains, MT 59859

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

Find more information on our website
bchmt.org

