

Decker Dispatch



East Slope Back Country Horsemen Tackle Weed Management

By Casey Drishinski, East Slope 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.



East Slope Back Country Horsemen member Ron Ries heads out to spray weeds at Swift Dam.

Here on the east slope of the Rocky Mountain Front, we are pretty lucky for lots of reasons. With millions of acres of accessible public lands and thousands of miles of motor-free (and largely mountain bike-free) trails to enjoy whenever the time allows, it's easy to get complacent and take these abundant gifts for granted. However, noxious weeds pose a threat to these treasures that requires

persistent action – and some creativity.

We all know that the best time to tackle almost any problem is when it is still small. When it comes to noxious weeds on our backcountry trails, sometimes infestations are few and far between. Maybe scattered between water crossings or confined to gravelly stream bottoms. It's all too easy to ride on by, hoping someone on foot or the USFS will

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East Slope Back Country Horsemen Tackle Weed Management

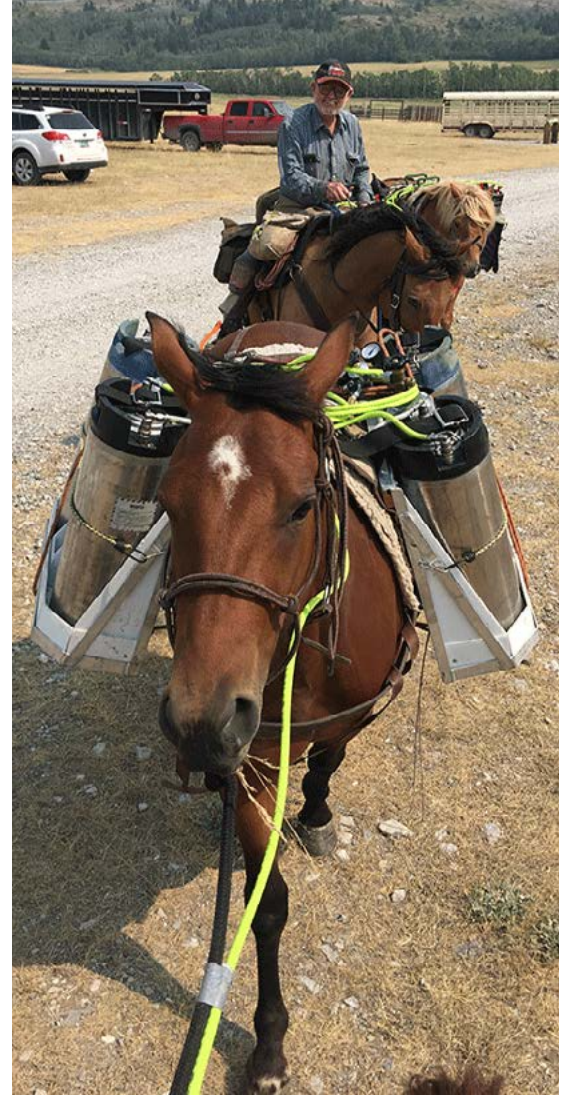
By Casey Drishinski, East Slope Back Country Horsemen
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tackle the problem. On the other hand, being horseback provides the ability to scan for weeds trailside while also covering longer distances and packing the proper equipment.

After decades of participating in annual community spray days to help beat down the weeds at the trailhead, in the summer of 2021, members of the East Slope Back Country Horsemen chapter decided to up their game. Members Ron Ries and Zane Drishinski designed and constructed horse-mounted herbicide spray gear to tackle spotted knapweed on the trails leading into the Bob Marshall Wilderness behind Swift Dam. After consulting with the USFS and the county weed district and lots of tinkering, they came up with two pressurized tank setups that could be carried by a packhorse, allowing the rider to spray from his horse.

Like you, our chapter is looking forward to the nice weather and getting back out on the trail. We are also looking forward to honing our new backcountry spray equipment and using our horsepower to tackle those hard-to-reach noxious weeds.

There are so many ways to ensure that noxious weeds don't ruin our favorite backcountry areas – educating people on weed identification, keeping our vehicles and trailers clean, and pitching in where we can to pull or spray weeds. If you are ready to trade in your backpack sprayer, are tired of dismounting every time you see a weed, or just want to make sure your packhorse is bulletproof, feel free to get in touch at zanethezman@yahoo.com.



Schedule for chapter 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 Wade Murphy, Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen Chair, BCH Montana

I am truly humbled to be elected as chairman of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana. When I joined BCHMT fifteen years ago, I had no desire to be involved with all of the meetings and formalities of the organization. I simply wanted to learn the art of packing with my animals. I had camped all my life and had been involved with horses for much of my life, but I had never combined the two hobbies. Now back country packing has become a major part of who I am. I owe all this to the many mentors I have found in this fine organization. I suppose after seeing all the important work that is being done by BCHMT members, I have been inspired to step up and help out in a leadership role. So here I sit trying to figure out what sort of things a state chairman is supposed to say in a newsletter.

As you all know, the last couple of years have been challenging for everyone. I want to thank the past two state chairmen, Rich and Sherri. They both did an amazing job of navigating BCHMT through the challenging times of COVID-19 with us not being able to meet in person for so long. Now, as we move on from COVID-19, it is time for some healing for our group. We have many chapters that have lost members and are facing some challenging times. The best advice I can give during tough times is to focus on our mission. At the core of all parts of our mission statement is the horse. Within the many different opinions and personalities in our organization we are united by our animals. People love their horses and they enjoy putting them to work.



We have all seen significant changes in the world the last two years. One significant change is the number of people wanting to get away from the crowds and seek some outdoor adventure. This is a great time for membership drives and public outreach.

One challenge BCH has is that we are often invisible to the public, since we do our work out in the hills. Take time to find ways to make your community aware of the work your chapter is doing and the services you are providing. Take advantage of the new technology of social media. Let your local paper know what you are doing. They are often looking for positive stories to print. It appears the COVID-19 mess is behind us and we have a great summer ahead us.

BCH has been going strong for 49 years here in Montana. It's amazing to think that our next convention will be the celebration of 50 strong years. Don't be discouraged by the last couple of years. Focus on the mission and our journey will continue. Let's all hit the trails hard this year and get back to doing what we love. Don't forget to invite a friend or neighbor. Ride safe.

Wade

Contact Wade at chair@bchmt.org

Youth Involvement Projects by the JBBCH

Article and photos by Leonard Francis, Rosalie Morse & Judy Fossum, Judith Basin Back Country Horsemen

Stick Horse Rodeo

The 2022 Montana Winter Fair Stick Horse Rodeo welcomed back the greatest cowboys and cowgirls between the ages of 2-8 on January 19, 2022. The event was hosted by the Judith Basin Back Country Horsemen, referred to as the JBBCH.

The rodeo was held in the Fergus County Fairgrounds Livestock Pavilion in Lewistown. Events included calf roping, steer wrestling and barrel racing. There were NO ENTRY FEES for this popular sport and every participant received a prize for each event.

Many cowboys and cowgirls brought their favorite stick horse but the JBBCH furnished some well-trained mounts as well. No animals were harmed in this production.

Miranda Milburn, JR Princess representing MT Saddle Club Association, welcomed the participants, demonstrated each event and coached the enthusiastic athletes as needed.

This stick horse rodeo has been one

of the most attended and enjoyed event of the MT Winter Fair. Many cowboys and cowgirls return each year to compete against siblings and friends.

Thanks to the amazing turnout of chapter members who showed up the afternoon before to help; set up under the direction of Leonard Francis was fast and efficient. They moved in panels, spread wood chips, hung up our JBBCH banner and whatever else was needed. Following our rodeo, the arena was used for the heifer show so it was designed to accommodate both events. Originally this was a brainchild of the JBBCH but when the Winter Fair Committee realized how popular it was, they asked to be involved.

Farm Safety Day

A new youth involvement project the JBBCH is going to be involved in this year is the Farm Safety Day sponsored by the Fergus County 4-H Ambassadors. First and second graders from surrounding schools in Fergus and

Petroleum Counties will attend in the morning with the Lewistown Schools attending for the afternoon. Stations will cover safety around tractors, cattle, fire, electricity, ATV's and horses. The JBBCH involvement will be to demonstrate, with an actual horse, how to be safe around horses. It is scheduled to be April 19, 2022 at the Fergus County Fairgrounds Livestock Pavilion from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. It is a new venture for us so we're excited to use another avenue to help perpetuate responsible livestock use with the youth.



Family Forestry Expo

By Ralph Hopkins, Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead

Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead has helped organize and participated in the Flathead Family Forestry Expo since the beginning, 32 years ago. The Expo is an event that offers hands-on exposure to the role forests play in our everyday lives. This yearly event has taken place through the dedicated involvement of over 30 diverse organizations such as local service clubs, forest industry, government natural resource agencies, conservation groups, professional societies, local businesses, many interested individuals, and numerous local donations.

Over 1,100 local fifth grade students from 28 schools stretching from Eureka to Charlo visited Expo the first week of May and learned about natural resource topics. The students visited stations that provide educational presentations about fisheries, aquatic/riparian systems, archaeology, wildlife, fire, backcountry ethics, plant identification, and forest management. The program is curriculum based and the field stations complement classroom study.

Some classes toured the F. H. Stolze Land and Lumber Co. mill; the remaining classes had the opportunity to take part in a portable sawmill demonstration and visit stations representing lumber manufacturing and forest products.

Anyone can take a forest walk along the half-mile wood chipped trail and visit a Back Country Horsemen campsite; test their tree id skills and take home a free conifer seedling; learn how to be bear aware; take a look at the many insects that live in our forest streams; learn how to be "firewise" at their home and fire safe when camping; check out the live owls and learn what animals make their home in northwest Montana forests.

A visit to the exhibit tent helps students and families learn about the many organizations that help take care of and manage our area forests, make a piece of paper, or try their hand at using a cross-cut saw.

The Saturday family-oriented event features a short forest walk offering educational stations and demonstrations along the way. Each station

provides information and hands-on activities that allow participants to learn about the many uses of our forests, private and public. A grandstand show was presented that featured logging equipment demonstrations and the Forest Service Spotted Bear Ranger District mule pack string. Various exhibits featuring local organizations, businesses, and agencies that deal with natural resources were on display. A free logging camp lunch was provided, compliments of Family Forestry Expo.

If you want to learn more, check out the Family Forestry Expo YouTube channel for videos featuring activity station topics and that give an inside look at how certain forest products are made, or the webpage at <https://www.familyforestryexpo.org/>.



National Director's Report

By John Chepulis, Beartooth Back Country Horsemen
National Director, BCHMT

Back Country Horsemen of America National Board Meeting

On April 11 - 13, 2022, National Directors Mark Himmel, John Chepulis and Alternate National Director Brad Pollman attended the National Board Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri. Also attending was BCHA Youth Chairman, Greg Schatz. It was great to meet face to face again, seeing old friends and meeting new ones.

Sunday, April 10th, was registration, committee chair meetings and new national director orientation. A welcome reception was held afterwards.

On Monday, April 11th, the National Board Meeting began with a flag presentation and roll call. Chairman Sherry Copeland gave The State of BCHA address. She talked about the implementation of the advocacy software, the thousands of hours spent at meetings, education and doing trail work. She said we have simplified our reporting processes, are a contributing partner to the Forest Service and Common Ground. Members are our boots on the ground. Chapters and States have proven successful the past year and we continue to set our standards higher and higher. Sherry reported that BCHA is in the public eye and we are being recognized across the country. She says we are all Back Country Horsemen and the "of what" does not matter. We currently have 12,795 members, 212 chapters, 30 states and 1 affiliate.

Committee reports were given and all reports can be found in the [NBM2022 folder in the shared drive](#).

A motion was made to vote in West Virginia as an affiliate member. They previously had been a member, but dissolved in 2011. The motion passed. A motion was made to change the Governance Policy to allow a change from "Telephone or Mail" to "Electronic Platform". This motion passed.

Volunteer Hours reported for 2021:

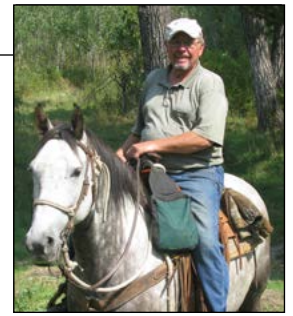
Total Hours	207,805
Total Travel Miles	1,021,410
Total Equip Hours	10,562
Total Stock Days	11,669
Total Donations:	179,566.04
Total Value	9,389,714,36

Director of Public Lands, Randy Rasmussen reported on:

- Senate Bill 1686, Beating back bikes in Wilderness.
- Forest Service White paper addressing horse camps.
- Defending against electric bikes - suggested we ride one
- Advocating for increased trail funding.

The Legacy Fund has been invested with Stifel - H & F Financial Group. \$125,000 was invested in 2021 with a value of \$136,853 at the end of the year. \$25,000 more has been invested in 2022 with a value on 3/18/2022 of \$150,200. None of this money can be used until it grows to \$500,000.

Tuesday, April 12, was Public Lands Day. Chairman of the Public Lands Committee, Brad Pollman, along with Mark Himmel and Jim Allen, gave a presentation on the structure of BCHA, a bottom up organization going from Chapter, State, Region, then National. They talked about the five different regions, Montana being in the Rocky Mountain Region, along with North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Colorado. How we resolve issues with the Forest Service and different tools we use like MOUs,



Volunteer Agreements, and Cost Share Agreements was discussed. It was very interesting and educational with a lot of questions being asked.

After lunch, Brenda Yankoviak with the Forest Service gave a presentation on the National Trails Program, the 10-year shared stewardship challenge, successes and challenges of the Forest Service, and the different funding opportunities available. Afterwards we broke into regions and talked with Forest Service saw personnel on how to get certified with chainsaw and cross cut. A lot of the regions are having trouble with this.

On Tuesday evening, Mark Himmel gave presentations on the Chapter Locator and Membership Data on the [www.bcha.org](#) website. John Chepulis gave a presentation on collecting volunteer hours.

On Wednesday, April 13th, the National Board Meeting continued. A motion was made to change our newsletter from one hard copy and three electronic copies per year to two hard copies and two electronic copies per year. This motion failed.

A motion was made to increase the fundraising budget to \$16,000 per year and look at hiring an outside fundraising firm to assist or take over. This motion failed.

A resolution was brought from California to facilitate growth of the BCHA legal fund. The motion passed.

The Volunteer Hours Committee will accept either the old or new reporting form when submitting hours.

Elections were held. Elected were:

Chairman	Sherry Copeland, Missouri
Vice Chair	Mark Himmel, Montana
Treasurer	Latifa Rodriguez, Colorado
Director EC	Craig Allen, Utah
	Dan Key, New Mexico
Non-Director EC.....	Tom Thomas, North Carolina

A motion was made to hold next year's convention in the Flathead of Montana; motion passed. Meeting adjourned.

The Banquet was held Wednesday evening and the Double Diamond Award was presented. Four applications were submitted. All the applications were excellent, but the best presented project goes to the NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen of Kalispell, Montana. A silent and live action followed.

Recent Public Lands Activity:

The US Senate has passed a giant omnibus Public Lands & Recreation Package which included the *Biking on Long Distance Trails Act* being folded into the Senate Bill. It says that before the Secretary designates the trail a long distance bike trail, the Secretary shall ensure the trail will not conflict with horseback riding or with pack and saddle stock. Now we need to ensure this wording gets included in the House version of the bill.

Evidently the [White Paper](#) on horse camps has been sent out, but not all line officers have seen it. Make sure your District Rangers and Forest Supervisors have seen this White Paper.

Be safe while doing your projects this summer and make sure you **keep track of your volunteer hours**.

John

Contact John at barcdiamond@gmail.com

Safety Moment

Fundamental training

Are you riding a safe horse? That is not necessarily a yes or no question. There is a certain amount of risk involved in our sport no matter how much planning and training we do. We can, however, choose whether we want to ride in the high risk category or in the low risk category. When we use animals with minimal training, poor ground manners, those that are spooky and jumpy, or those that are high energy and hard to control we put ourselves into a high risk category. The opposite of that is using animals with solid foundational training. When we take the time to give our animals a solid foundation of groundwork and body control in the saddle we set ourselves up for success and put ourselves in a low risk category. I'll list a few of the basic exercises I do with my animals when I am training them and also when I get ready for a ride.

Simple circling: this is similar to lunging. Send the animal in a circle around you. I'm looking for a quiet, calm animal and I am looking for slack in the lead line. I'm paying close attention to their body language to see what frame of mind they are in before I progress. I am NOT running them in a circle to take the energy out of them. When I ride I want them to have energy, but I want them to be in the correct frame of mind.

Hip control: I quietly ask them to roll their hip away from me. Again I'm watching body language. I'm looking for a big step where the near foot steps in front of the far foot. I do this in both directions.

Shoulder control: I quietly ask the horse to pivot on his hind end moving his shoulders away from me. I do this in both directions. This is humbling for a horse and this will often be a sticking point. An animal that wants to challenge your leadership will resist this action. They will plant their front end and not want to move away from you. A horse that recognizes your leadership will willingly move its front end away.

Backing: Confirm that your animal will back willingly with some urgency. Similar to shoulder control, this will quickly show your horse's frame of mind.

Flexing the head: I will flex the head from the ground in both directions. Their feet must not be moving. I want them light and soft.

When I mount I confirm these simple control tasks from the saddle. The horse must stand still while I mount and then wait for my cue before he moves. I will flex the head left and right a few

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



times. I will confirm body control by moving the hips and shoulders. I will back the animal a bit and walk a few soft circles. These are all exercises that the animal has done dozens of times already and they help to get him thinking again. These exercises can also be used on the trail when they get nervous and their brain checks out on you. Get good at these or similar tasks so you can use them when you need to. The more successful you are in keeping your horse's brain engaged the safer you will be in the saddle.

BCHMT is having another rendezvous at Monture in June. This will be similar to last year's gathering. I will be hosting a three-hour riding clinic on Friday afternoon, June 24th. The time has not been set yet. We will be covering these and some other exercises for riding in control. There is room for 12 riders. Give me a call or e-mail to reserve your spot. Please don't save a spot if you cannot commit to being there. Hope to see you there.

Safe and happy trails.

Wade

406-431-1717

chair@bchmt.org



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

Slough Creek Cabin pasture fence

By Molly Glenn, Gallatin Back Country Horsemen

In the last 10 years, maybe longer, a conversation about the pasture fence at Slough Creek has been part of every trip. In the past, upon arriving at Slough Creek, someone would need to ride/walk around the outside of the pasture to be sure it was secure. One particular time, this step was skipped and the evening was spent looking for loose horses! The pasture fence was a jumble of propped up rails, old electric fence tape tied up and sagging rotten rails. Luck and a prayer were keeping the horses contained each trip. In addition, buffalo and the Silver Tip horses were enjoying the pasture grass. Several brainstorming sessions about getting materials to the site resulted in both the Forest Service and the Ninemile Pack Train getting the necessary posts and rails to Slough Creek.

The work began in the summer of 2020, with a crew from the GVBCH building and fixing all the fence around the cabin, water gap, and a new corral around the tack shed. A new gate was added on the west side of the area around the cabin so horses could be let out into the pasture without going through the corral. This group, which included: Laurie Connelly, Mark DeOp-somer, Lew Goodpasture, Dan Marsh, Kenji Aoki, Henry and Molly Glenn

continued the work on the sides of the pasture. The week went by quickly and an amazing amount of work was accomplished. It was probably the most labor intensive trip to date. Everyone in the group dragged posts and rails from the drop sites to the work site, used brace and bit to screw on rails (no more 60 penny nails and a sledge!), and dug new post holes. We didn't encounter too many rocky spots, but the pasture was saving that for last...he he. This trip got a great start on the fence...192 rails and 20+ posts reset. There were some posts that were still good, which saved us some time. Each rail was notched with an axe so it sat flush with the post. In addition to the fence, the tack room door was re-hung on new rollers, and the cabin steps were rebuilt. As a parting gesture, Mark and Lew crawled up on the porch roof and straightened the elk antlers.

Henry and Lew returned later in the fall with a crew from the Forest Service to extend the sides of the pasture to the designated endpoints. This trip was entirely digging post holes and resetting the side post, as they had sunk to a "jumpable" level. The Forest Service mule Traveler reminded us of this several days in a row. Thankfully, Traveler just wanted the grass on the outside of

the fence and as soon as I pointed him back to the pasture, he jumped back in!

In the summer of 2021, another GVBCH crew went back to finish the back side of the pasture. Since the new pasture is not quite as big as the old pasture, this process was going to be ALL NEW POST HOLES, as we crossed the pasture to connect the two sides...51 post holes. We got through the first six or so in good time, then we hit rocks... the pasture had saved the "best" for last! This crew: Laurie Connelly, Jill Stephens, Chris Nygren, Dan Marsh, Lew Goodpasture, Henry and Molly Glenn, decided that even with digging in rocky soil, dragging the posts and rails to each site was the least favorite activity! We counted down to the last post and rail and spent some bonding time carrying all the materials to where they were going to be used. We negotiated and traded jobs and the last morning dug the final six holes. Each hole was 30 inches deep, dug with post-hole diggers, wrecking bars, shovels and by handfuls.

This project allows for those that pack to the cabin the ability to let horses out without fear of them getting away. The fence is secure, the horses have easy access to water, and the pasture will not get eaten down by buffalo or the Silver Tip horses.





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

Find more information on our website:
bchmt.org

