



# Decker Dispatch



## Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen Packing Clinics

By Dan Mathis

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.

We started doing packing clinics a few years ago to support our USFS District YCC/MCC programs at Plains and Superior, Montana. We have several large scale projects that we partner with the Lolo National Forest Ranger District including the Big Hole Peak Lookout Restoration (see video link-next page), so expanding support to their YCC/MCC programs was a natural progression. In 2021 we opened this packing clinic program up to the general public, primarily targeting adults with previous horse experience.

Our primary objective is to have some fun and expose the community to the skills necessary to take advantage of outdoor recreation opportunities that surround the local area. Our secondary objective is to introduce local residents to the WHPBCH organization and make

them aware of our involvement in the community.

A single day packing clinic is a challenging but rewarding endeavor. We schedule these clinics in the spring and early summer months in an attempt to deconflict with our USFS project support and personal packing schedules. For many of us, it is also a great opportunity to brush up on our own packing skills prior to the season.

Our YCC/MCC clinics are geared more toward people with minimal to no horse experience, while our open clinics target those that understand basic horsemanship. Both of our programs optimize hands-on learning with no more than two participants per head of stock. We organize the agenda and conduct the class so that each participant gets multiple repetitions of applying a skill, such as many-

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## Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen Packing Clinics

By Dan Mathis

[continued from front page]

ing and slinging loads from both sides of the animal under mentorship of an experienced member.

Our members provide the stock and all of the packing equipment and tools. Many or most of our members who conduct these clinics have participated in multiple clinics conducted by Smoke Elser, Bob Hoverson and others. In fact, we use the Elser and Hoverson books as references early on in the clinic.

Our format is to have one of our members expeditiously explain and demonstrate a skill to the group, then break them up into pairs under guidance of an experienced member to practice the skill for a few repetitions. After pack saddle intro and fitting techniques we quickly get into mantying symmetrical loads. Using empty containers of various types the participants learn these basic mantying skills. We then guide them through unpacking and re-stowing the ropes and manties. By de-configuring these mantied loads when we progress to slinging basket-hitched and barrel-hitched loads, the participants must now manty each load again. This gives them as many as eight repetitions of mantying during the course of the day.

As the participants practice the various skills, there is naturally a great deal of interaction with the chapter member who is helping them through the learning process. At times these interactions require consultation with other members and in these cases, learning occurs on both sides. These interactions are uniformly positive and often result in adding new members to our chapter. The normal atmosphere for one of these clinics is a nearly constant exchange of intermingled discussion and laughter; people learning and having fun.

Suitable facilities for stock, equipment, parking and people are certainly a significant consideration and we have had luck with coordinating with the community to use private arenas in the early spring. As weather improves, we move outside to a fairground or other area. The chapter members provide post-clinic cleanup and Porta Johns where required. Our class sizes run 15-20 for the open classes and somewhat larger for the YCC/MCC groups, where we often get participation from the local USFS trail crews as well. This interaction with the FS crews has intrinsic benefit in that when we support their trail clearing and restoration efforts they possess an understanding of the effort required to pack stock and the challenges



Watch the video, "Big Hole Peak Lookout Restoration" on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/T1GeSi8KPaY>

associated with excessively large or non-geometric loads. In 2022 we conducted two open and one YCC/MCC classes.

There are numerous benefits to conducting these packing clinics, a few of which include:

1. Fun time for everyone.
2. Positive community exposure for the chapter. Last year we had 10 new members join the chapter from these clinics, and a local newspaper covered and published articles on one of the clinics as well as our ongoing USFS project support.
  - a. <https://www.sclledger.net/story/2022/06/16/communities/ready-for-the-season/7926.html>
  - b. <https://www.sclledger.net/story/2022/06/23/communities/local-club-teaches-stock-packing-skills/7976.html>
3. When you have to teach others how to perform a skill, it forces you to think a little more about your own techniques, generally resulting in refinements to your packing skill repertoire.
4. It forces you to get your equipment out early and get it ready for the upcoming season.

We have found that there is a great deal of interest in our local community to learn packing skills. We believe that hosting these clinics is a valuable component of the chapter's overall program of enriching our membership and the larger community, including a popular poker ride and expansive support of the USFS ranger district.

Here is a sample agenda we have used in the past. All times are notional and merely used in an attempt to keep the class moving and on schedule. We often take more or less time on a topic depending on interest and the situation.

### Introduction to Horse/Mule Packing

9-9:30: Registration/payment paperwork, Welcome, Introductions (John- 5 minutes).

[continued bottom of next page]

## Letter from the Chair

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

WOW, 50 YEARS!

As I'm sure most of you are already aware, this year is the 50 year celebration of the Back Country Horsemen. That is an amazing accomplishment. What started around a campfire in Montana 50 years ago has turned into an organization that reaches all across the country and has significant influence on how our public lands are managed. Many organizations come and go year after year, but only a small percentage of them make it to major milestones like 50 years. BCH is successful because what we do really matters. Our work projects are very rewarding and make a significant difference for many backcountry users.

The BCHMT convention this year in Kalispell is April 14-16. I hope you all consider attending and joining in the 50 year celebration. I know the Flathead chapter has been quite busy planning a very special convention.

BCHA will be holding their annual meeting in Kalispell for a few days immediately following our convention. Members are encouraged to stay for the national gathering and experience what takes place at the national level.

2022 was a very good year for BCHMT. This was the first year of a statewide volunteer agreement and also a statewide



challenge cost share for mileage reimbursement. BCHMT has a claim in to the Forest Service for just shy of \$20,000. That money will go right back to our hardworking members to help offset travel costs for work projects.

Once again the hard working members of BCHMT broke the \$1,000,000 mark for total value of our volunteer work hours. The actual number was \$1,031,543! I hope you are busy planning the 2023 field season. I am working with the Forest Service to put another statewide volunteer agreement in place so members can spend less time doing paperwork and more time in the saddle. There will also be a new challenge cost share put in place to reimburse members for Forest Service related expenses. All of this information will be sent out to your directors as the new processes are put into place.

Take care and I hope to see you in Kalispell in April.

Wade

Contact Wade at [murphywade923@gmail.com](mailto:murphywade923@gmail.com)

Ground Rules: No side conversations during Instructor presentations. Instructors needing to talk to each other need to move away from participants as not to distract from instructor presenting (John - 1 minute).

Handy References:

*Packin' In on Mules and Horses* (Smoke Elser and Bob Brown 1980).

*The Packer's Field Manual* (Bob Hoverson, 2005). (John - 1 minute).

Lecture/Demonstration: (overview of cargo packing methods/tools on stock) riding saddles/saddle panniers; pack saddles: panniers, folding cargo platforms, bear resistant boxes, lumber bunks and manties (John- 5 minutes).

Lecture/Demonstration: Adjusting a decker to a pack animal - adjustments/clearances (Dave -10 minutes). Prep: One of Dave/Laurie's animals saddled and ready to demonstrate.

Lecture/Demonstration: Saddling the decker, latigo safety knot, display the basket hitch, putting up sling ropes and putting the saddle away (Dianne - 15 minutes).

Hands-on practice saddling, readying the basket hitch, putting up the sling rope and putting away a decker saddle (all instructors help - 30 minutes)

Demonstration: spreading the manty, balancing loads, mantying a load (vertical), put away a manty and ropes (Cheryl - 15 minutes).

Hands-on practice: spreading manty, mantying vertically and horizontally tied manties, putting manty and ropes away (all instructors help- 30 minutes).

Hands-on: Saddle decker, manty load, sling load, unload, un-manty, put way manty and put away saddle (all instructors help - 30 minutes). Leave one of John's mules saddled.

Demonstration: Barrel Hitch, sling a barrel hitch load (John- 10 minutes).

Hands-on: Saddle decker, manty load, sling a barrel hitch load, unload, un-manty, put away manty and put away saddle (all instructors help- 30 minutes). Prep: Leave three head saddled and two loads mantied on for next demonstrations.

Demonstration: Decker Diamond (Dan- 15 minutes, use loaded panniers with top load)

Demonstration: Christensen Hitch (Dave - 15 minutes, use mantied loads from previous exercise)

Demonstration: Lumber Hitch (John- 15 minutes - 5' posts)

Hands-on: Saddle decker, manty load, sling load, unload, un-manty, put away manty and put away saddle (all instructors help- 45 minutes). Three stations with three head at each station (Station 1 is decker diamond, Station 2 is Christensen hitch, Station 3 is lumber hitch). Participates rotate through each station in groups of six (3-two person teams).

Lecture: Back/Eye Splicing: Demonstration followed by practice (Cheryl - 30 minutes):

Demonstration: Tying together a string with pigtails (John - 5 minutes).

Customizing saddle bars to your animal: Flour/pancake mix imprint (Dave - 15 minutes).

Demonstration: Tying Up (2-3 ways) (Jean)

Hands-on: practice tying halter to rail and stock trailer (no stock) - (all instructors help).

[Editor's Note: Contact the author at [ibbowhnr@yahoo.com](mailto:ibbowhnr@yahoo.com) for the YCC Clinic agenda.]

# Beartooth BCH Provides Pack Support for Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation

By John Jenkins, Beartooth BCH, State Director, Past BBCH President

The Beartooth Chapter is bit of a “geographic” outlier. We’re the farthest east in the state by far – almost isolated. We have a large area to cover and lots of work opportunities. Our main stomping ground, however, is the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness (ABW), which is about a million acres; the so-called “crown jewel” of the Yellowstone ecosystem, which bridges the Custer-Gallatin NF in MT and the Shoshone NF in WY. The mountains here are generally more rugged than in other areas of the state, particularly in the eastern part of this Wilderness. The ABW includes the highest peak in Montana, Granite Peak at 12,807 ft, considered one of the most difficult ‘highest in a state’ peaks to climb.

Our primary collaboration with another non-profit is with the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation ([abwilderness.org](http://abwilderness.org)) based in Red Lodge. Its mission is to foster appreciation of wildlands, specifically the ABW, through education, outreach, and volunteer projects which include site restoration, weed management and trail maintenance – where we assist.

The Beartooth BCH has provided pack support for several years for numerous back country projects for the ABW Foundation, all coordinated with the local ranger districts. Volunteer trail maintenance crews of up to 8-9 volunteers with a project leader hike in to a site in the ABW, set up camp, and work for 5-6 days on various aspects of trail maintenance. In recent years we supported projects including: brushback of a few miles of trail out of Paradise Valley (E Fk Mill Cr, 2 years running); bog bridge replacement out of Cooke City (on the southern portion of the famous Beaten Path hiking trail); weed management in a large wilderness meadow (Meatrack, west of the Boulder River); water bar replacement and erosion control on the Lake Fork trail out of Red Lodge just below Sundance Pass (10,991 ft); and general trail maintenance on the Stillwater River from both ends, south from Nye and north out of Cooke City (before the 2022 flood). That’s just a sample. Volunteers, from college students to professionals, on these projects come from all over the US, and some even from overseas. For many of the crew this is a vacation or travel experience.

There’s a good bit of logistics and coordination in these projects other than gathering enough pack animals and saddles. A project usually goes something like this... There’s a last-minute flurry of phone calls and emails the week before to determine how big the volunteer crew is, how many pack animals are needed, who is available to pack, what gear and tools are being packed, and whether distances from home or on the trail require us to stay overnight at the trailhead or in the wilderness. We meet at a trailhead at 9 AM, gather gear, and send the crew hiking. Then we pack up, pass the crew on the trail, and drop the gear at a designated camp site. If we don’t stay overnight, we have a quick (late) lunch or break, often with the crew, and head out the same day. A week later we ride back in the evening prior and camp, or early on the morning and pack them out, meeting at the trailhead. These trips may be anywhere from 5 or 6 miles to 12 miles in.

When the driving distances are long, up to 140 miles one way, over the famed Beartooth Pass at 11,000 ft, and the trail miles are rugged and/or long, it can be quite a strain to do these projects in one day in the middle of the week when you work for a living. So we have started staying in with the trail crew overnight. Well, that’s not the only reason, of course. In the last several years there’s been three or four projects each summer staggered a week apart. So that’s a good excuse for us to sleep on the ground at least one night every week for a couple of months in the summer.

The gear is quite varied so our motto is “whatever works.” Gear always includes at least two pair of bear-proof (food) panniers and multiple tools like a variety of saws, axes, numerous pruners for brushing back, shovels, and Puluskis. Then there is general camp and cooking gear, stoves and personal gear and tents. We use a variety of packing styles out of necessity: from hard or soft panniers with single or double diamond-tied top loads to mantied loads to Utah bags for long tools. It’s not uncommon to see one packer pulling a string of three equines, each packed with a different style. We had an interesting challenge the last two years, due to the group being in a highly used area with another crew for two weeks total



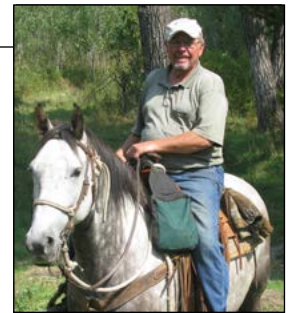
out of three continuous weeks. It was almost like a boom town in the middle of the wilderness. In order not to “foul” the area too much a stainless steel privy was packed in. Yep, that’s right. But no liquids in it. It all had to be packed out. There has been ample opportunity to train new packers and broaden a single riding animal’s skillset to include packing. Sometimes putting a borrowed pack animal in with your string is a challenge (or rodeo).

There’s nothing like back country comradery with this group. We share meals, stories and a campfire together. Many of the volunteer crew have not been around equines, so camping with horses is added to their wilderness experience and service. Logistic issues do not end with getting the crew in and knowing what day to return to pick them up. We have had to manage communication to get them out a day early a few times due to “wildlife encounters”, injury (fortunately mild), or even truly inclement weather on the next to last day of summer – by that I mean a snow storm.

We appreciate their trail maintenance, and they appreciate not having to backpack in all their gear, food and tools for a week of wilderness work. We have also enlisted their help with sorting/packing gear, weighing bear proof panniers, holding animals while loading, etc. The Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness trail management benefits from this close working relationship between the Beartooth chapter and the like-minded A-B Wilderness Foundation. We have accomplished more together than either group could alone.

# National Director's Report

By John Chepulis, Beartooth Back Country Horsemen  
National Director, BCHMT; Volunteer Hours Chairman BCHA



In 2022, the Back Country Horsemen of Montana cleared 823 miles of trails in Wilderness and 1,254 miles of other trails, totaling 2,077 miles. 9,384 hours were put in doing Basic, Skilled and Recon work on our trails, trailheads and campgrounds etc.

2,785 hours were spent on teaching clinics, seminars and presentations to the public. Time spent attending, or presenting at public meetings, attending Forest planning and other agency meetings, participation at display booths representing Back Country Horsemen, parades, etc. totaled 440 hours.

2,599 hours were spent planning or coordinating projects with agencies, planning clinics, Volunteer Hours record keeping, Newsletter Editor hours, and research and writing articles to be published in a newsletter.

Actual hours spent going to and from projects, educational events or public meetings were 4,255 hours. Personal vehicle travel and stock hauling travel totaled 107,524 miles.

Power equipment hours using chain saws, weed trimmers etc. were 618 hours, and 84 hours were spent on heavy equipment using trailers, dump trucks, tractors, skidsters, etc.

The number of saddle and pack stock used times the number of days used on a project totaled 1,824 Stock Days.

Donations of money or material from chapter treasury, personal or business accounts totaled \$63,022.92 this past year giving Back Country Horsemen of Montana a total value of \$1,031,543.98 for the Year 2022.

By volunteering our time and resources assisting the various government agencies in the maintenance and management of our public lands, we will make sure that public lands remain open for our generation and for generations to come. Thank you for all you do.

Also, remember that if your chapter is putting in for the Double Diamond Award it must be sent to me by March 20th or email to Volunteer@bcha.org. You can put in for any educational or volunteer project you have completed this past year on trail maintenance, trail

construction, trailhead construction, educational program or youth program.

John

Contact John at:  
[barcdiamond@gmail.com](mailto:barcdiamond@gmail.com)

**\$1,031,543.98**  
**total value of volunteerism**  
**by BCHMT in 2022**

BCH MT				
2022 Volunteer Hours Report				
January/1/2022-December/31/2022				
	P1 Totals	Rate per hour/mile/day	Total Value	
Total Basic Hours	3678	\$29.95	<b>\$110,156.10</b>	Calculated per hour
Total Skilled Hours	4358	\$44.93	<b>\$195,804.94</b>	Calculated per hour
Total Trail Recon Hours	1348	\$29.95	<b>\$40,372.60</b>	Calculated per hour
Total LNT - Education	2785	\$29.95	<b>\$83,410.75</b>	Calculated per hour
Total Public Meetings	440	\$29.95	<b>\$13,178.00</b>	Calculated per hour
Total Administrative Service	2599	\$29.95	<b>\$77,840.05</b>	Calculated per hour
Total Travel Time	4255	\$29.95	<b>\$127,444.74</b>	Calculated per hour
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>19463.25</b>			
Wilderness Trail Miles	823			
Other Trail Miles	1254			
<b>Total Trail Miles</b>	<b>2076</b>			
Personal Vehicle	47982	\$0.62	<b>\$29,748.78</b>	Calculated per mile
Stock Hauling	59542	\$1.35	<b>\$80,382.11</b>	Calculated per mile
<b>Total Travel Miles</b>	<b>107524.2</b>			
Power Equipment	618	\$30.00	<b>\$18,543.00</b>	Calculated per hour
Heavy Equipment	84	\$110.00	<b>\$9,240.00</b>	Calculated per hour
<b>Total Equipment Hours</b>	<b>702.1</b>			
Total Stock (Pack and Saddle)	1341			
<b>Total Stock Days</b>	<b>1824</b>	\$100.00	<b>\$182,400.00</b>	Calculated per day
Total Donations	\$63,022.92		<b>\$63,022.92</b>	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,031,543.98</b>	

# Safety Moment

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



## Managing Anxiety

Anxiety is a part of horsemanship that is a very important factor in our safety. As riders, we need to be aware of our own anxieties and also the anxieties of our animals. As I'm sure you know, an anxious horse can make a rider nervous, and also an anxious rider can make an animal nervous. Our job as horsemen is to learn to control our own anxieties and also control the anxiety of our animals.

For this article I want to focus on the anxiety of our horses and mules. Not all anxiety is bad. It is actually a tool that is used for training. In a round corral we use an animal's anxiety of ropes and other pressure to drive them around the corral. We can use their anxiety to move their body without having to make physical contact with a whip.

In the saddle an experienced rider can train their animal to move off of the slightest pressure or yield to the slightest touch of the reins. The anxiety in an animal reminds them that if they ignore the soft, light cues then more aggressive cues will likely follow. They are happy to choose the lighter, softer cue. They quickly become a quiet, willing partner.

Anxiety is also used for desensitizing. It is important to teach our animals how to deal with their fears. There are many different methods of desensitizing, but the concept is the same. We apply pressure to our animal to make them nervous and then allow them to calm down. The more we teach them to relax around scary items, the safer they become. As a trainer we can use their anxieties to make them better animals.

Many horsemen are guilty of causing way too much anxiety in their animals. A little can be useful, but too much can cause a lot of problems both on the ground and in the saddle. An aggressive person with a strong "SHOW THAT HORSE WHO IS THE BOSS!" attitude can quickly turn an animal into a nervous, jumpy animal. A horse around this type of person never knows when they will get smacked or have their bit yanked on, so they have a constant high level of anxiety around aggressive people. This is a dangerous situation.

The better approach is calm but firm leadership that gives the animal confidence. Give quiet and clear commands and allow your animal time to think things through. It is very hard for horses to think and learn when they are scared. Wise horsemen learn to be very observant of their animal's body language and adjust to the animal's needs. Sometimes you need to use more pressure to get the response you are asking for. Sometimes you need a lot less pressure to allow the animal to relax and think.

Late winter and spring are great times to work on ground work and tune up our four-legged friends for our summer season. As you work your horse, be extra

observant of his body language. Watch his eyes, ears, lips, nostrils, mouth, tail, breathing, head level and other signals to read what your horse is telling you. The fastest way to quality training is to take the time to keep them calm and thinking clearly.

Soak time: After you teach your animal something, give them time to just stand and process it. This is a very important part of their learning. Give them a full minute or two to just relax with no pressure on them. You can watch the anxiety drain from them. Animals quickly start to crave this relaxation time.

Your safety is directly tied to your ability to control your horse's anxiety. Work hard at it and be observant of your horse's body language. They will love you for it.

Ride safely.

Wade

406-431-1717

[murphywade923@gmail.com](mailto:murphywade923@gmail.com)



Photo by Shannon Freix

**Schedule for chapter news article submissions. Submit 400-500 words, photos in separate .jpg files (not in Word) E-mail to: [deborah.bcha@gmail.com](mailto:deborah.bcha@gmail.com) Editor reserves the right to edit articles.**  
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.

# Historic East Fork Guard Station Livestock Corral Reconstruction Project August 2nd- 4th, 2022, and September 17th, 2022

By Dan Maiyo, Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen (BRBCH) newsletter editor and board member

This project was coordinated with Jake Long, USFS Recreation Specialist for the Darby Ranger District, Montana, who supplied all materials for the project. Darrel Reese, financial planner at Sagemont Investment Group in Hamilton, funded all the food for our meals including meats supplied by Hamilton Packing Inc. Thank you, Darrel!

On Tuesday afternoon, August 2nd, volunteers met at the historic East Fork Guard Station to begin work replacing the old livestock corral. The site is located approximately 15 miles northeast from the intersection of State Hwy 93 and East Fork Road, 18 miles south of Darby, Montana, along the East Fork of the Bitterroot River. Project leader Dan Maiyo conducted a tailgate safety briefing at 1:00 P.M.

Approximately 450 linear feet of 6-inch diameter pressure treated posts and 3-inch x 16 ft. long pressure treated rails replaced the existing post and three-rail fence. Approximately 410 linear feet of pressure treated, pre-fitted jack fence replaced the existing jack fence. Existing wood swing gates were removed and two 8-foot steel swing gates were installed, providing access to the main corral from the driveway.

Bill Slempp provided his skid steer with a post pounder attachment. Dan Brandborg provided his tractor to transport posts, rails and jack bundles to strategic locations. Chain saws were used to trim rails and cut piles of log debris in the corral. Rails were secured to the pre-fitted jack posts, using impact drills to drive in wood screws. We knocked off at 5 P.M. after a marathon day of installing the post and rail fence, and half the jacks and rails. We sat down at the East Fork pavilion for a delicious pulled pork dinner with all the trimmings and dessert.

Wednesday morning volunteers were served hot coffee and a Dutch oven breakfast. We began work at 9 A.M. More volunteers arrived in the afternoon to help provide lunch and further contribute to the combined effort. Work was completed at 3:30 P.M. However, the supply of rails was short by one bundle, necessitating a re-visit

to complete the project at a later date.

That evening the crew was treated to a dinner consisting of BBQ steaks with Dutch oven fried potatoes, veggies and dessert. After dinner and cleanup, most of the volunteers departed. The next morning, Jake Long joined us for breakfast and voiced his appreciation for the work done so quickly and so well!

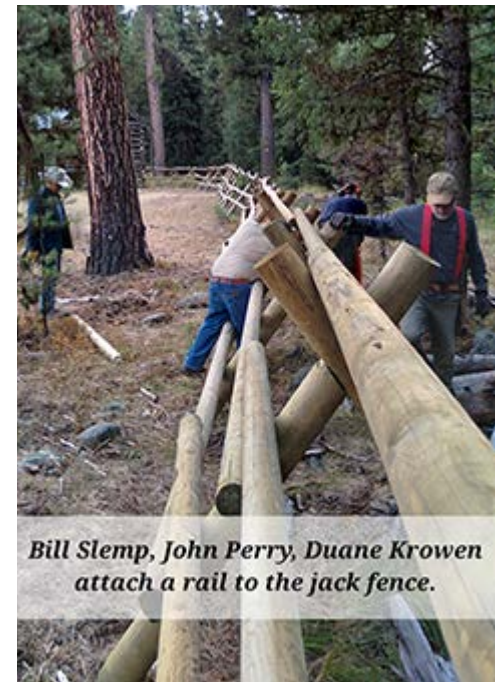
At 9:00 A.M. on Saturday, Septem-

ber 17th, BRBCH volunteers once again met at the East Fork Guard Station to complete the project. Chain saws were used to trim the tops of the fence posts, and rails were secured to the remaining jack fence. The work was successfully completed by noon.

Congratulations and thank you to all BRBCH members who volunteered for this A-Team effort project!



*Bill Slempp operates his skid steer with post pounder attachment. Joe Kirkland makes sure it goes in straight*



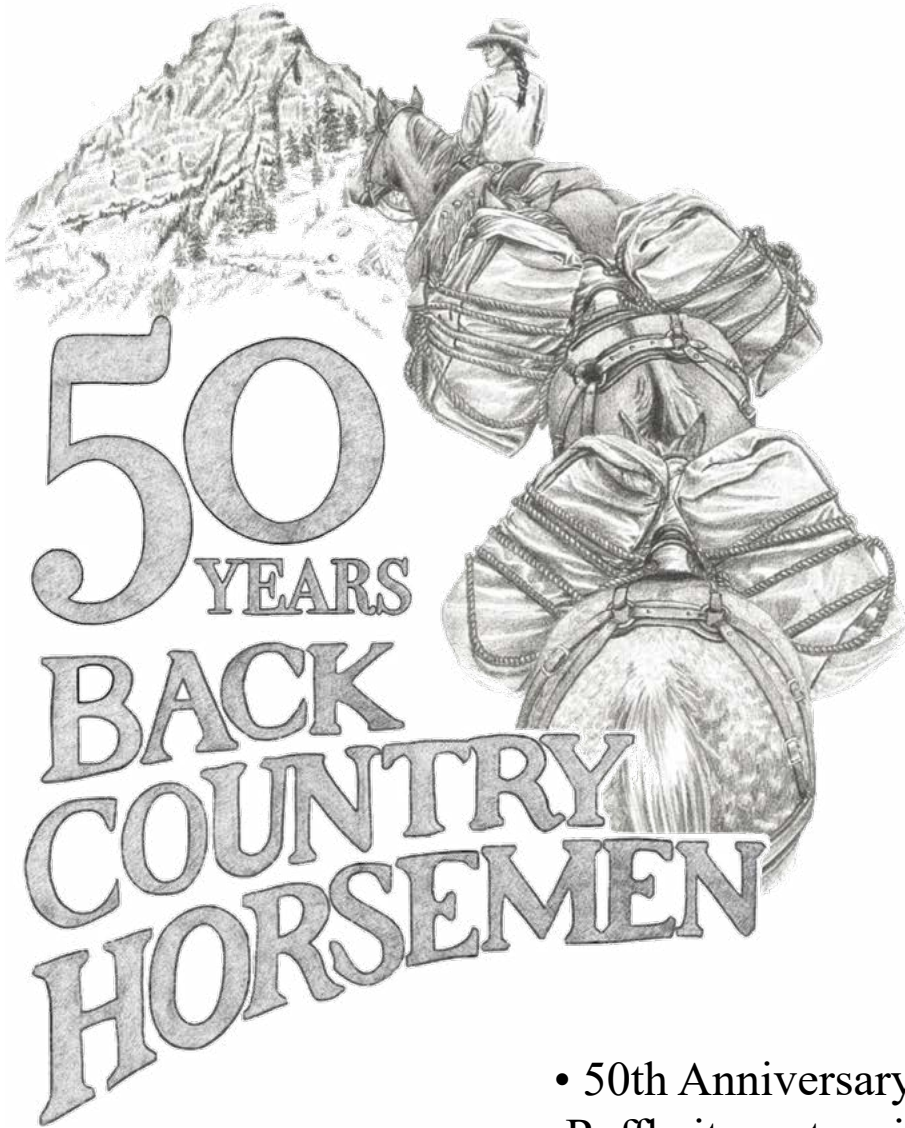
*Bill Slempp, John Perry, Duane Krownen attach a rail to the jack fence.*



*Completed post and rail fence*

# Back Country Horsemen Celebrates 50 Years of Service

April 14-16, 2023 BCH Montana State Convention  
and 50th Anniversary Celebration in Kalispell, Montana  
April 16-19 BCHA National Board Meeting



Majestic Valley Arena, our meeting venue



Red Lion Hotel, rooms reserved

- Seminars
- Photo contest
- Dinner and entertainment
- Vendor booths
- 50th Anniversary keepsake belt buckles / shirts
- Raffle items to win / live auction / silent auction
- Come enjoy the fun where the Back Country Horsemen began in 1973

**REGISTER HERE:**

<https://bchmt.org/wp/flathead/50-years/>

Find all the convention information on this website.

We will keep adding information as our plans progress.



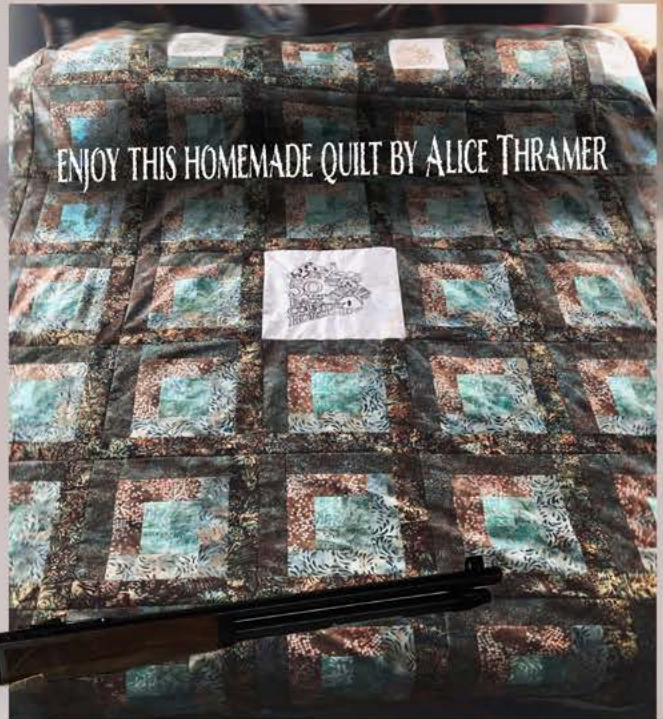
# RAFFLE TICKET PRIZES!



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PRESENTED BY THE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF THE FLATHEAD

# History Lesson

The following is an excerpt take from "Backcountry Horsemen of America - The First 25 Years," written in 1973 by Lloyd Fagerland. He was historian of the first BCHA. The article can be found on the convention website at <https://bchmt.org/wp/flathead/50-years/>.

## In the Beginning - The Early Years

It all began at Columbia Falls, Montana on January 17, 1973. At least that was when Back Country Horsemen was officially organized. Actually, the seed was planted a year or more previous to that when four friends began to talk about the need for an organization of horsemen that would specifically meet the needs and interests of back country stock users. There were lots of horse organizations, but none that they were aware of that showed any interest in back country horse use. Those four friends were Roland Cheek, Ken Ausk, Dennis Swift and Dulane Fulton.

A great deal of credit should be given to those four men and the others that joined them that first year in charting the course that this new organization would follow. They developed a program and philosophy that has withstood the test of time. Those included:

- (1) Interest and involvement in public lands management, especially as it affected recreational stock users.
- (2) participation in volunteer programs on public lands, with emphasis on those that improved riding opportunities.
- (3) Education of both members and non-members about low impact methods of handling stock in the woods.

Those three items may sound familiar today because we still use them as the foundation upon which we built, but in 1973 they were all rather radical ideas. Previous that time, there had been no one who spoke for the wilderness or back country horse user. In 1974 the Forest Service began work on a new Bob Marshall Wilderness Management Plan. There was a lot of anti-stock sentiment shown in that first draft, including a permit system for stock users, but no



Ken Ausk, Roland Cheek, Dulane Fulton, and Dennis Swift.



one else. BCH raised ten objections to the plan and eventually all of those were resolved in a way that we approved. We can only speculate now on what might be the present-day situation in the Bob Marshall Wilderness for stock users if BCH hadn't been ready and willing to meet that challenge in 1974.

There are all sorts of groups involved in the volunteer program today, but in 1973 that wasn't so. The whole concept was received with a great deal of skepticism and ridicule. The idea that people would spend their free time clearing trails or doing similar jobs for the government was thought to be crazy, out of touch with reality. As we added additional chapters here in Montana, some embraced the volunteer concept, but others did not. They said that if we did work for the Forest Service or Parks, that they would just do less and

less, that appropriations for trail work would be cut, etc. But eventually they all came on board. Today I doubt if there is a local unit in BCHA that does not do some volunteer work.

It was recognized early on that most horsemen were doing a poor job of caring for the back country. The signs were left for all to see in dirty and abused campsites. Some of those horsemen were not going to change. That was the way they had always done it and they would continue to do so. But it was thought that there were many that would change their methods if they were shown how important it was. An educational program began that first summer with the writing and printing of the first Guidebook. Our present Guidebook is patterned after that book and parts of it are included there.

## Convention Presenters

Robin Collins - lead packer of the USFS Northern Region Pack Train, presenting the pack train and a three-part packing clinic



Wade Murphy - horse and mule trainer, presenting a live demonstration on getting your horse ready to hit the trail



Dr. Amy Pearson, poet - reading from her book, "100 Days of Solitude"



Dr. Stacie G. Boswell, DVM, DACVS-LA - presenting veterinary horse care in the backcountry



Emmy Sauer, BS in Environmental Science - speaking on teaching youth about horse use in the backcountry



Dr. Eva-Maria Maggie - writer, teacher and packer, reading from her collection of *Smoke Elser's stories*



Gillian Larson - Long Distance Trail Thru Rider, presenting a show on the *Continental Divide and Pacific Crest trails*



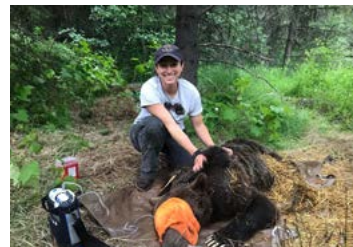
Jennifer Hintz Guse - botanist, presenting the wildflowers of Montana



John Fraley - author, reading from his book, "*Heroes of the Bob Marshall Wilderness*"



Justine Valieres - Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks grizzly bear specialist, presenting *Grizzly Bears in the Crown of the Continent*



Robert Eversole - The Trailmeister



Erin Burke-Webster - certified Iyengar yoga teacher, presenting yoga to help you ride in comfort



Wayne Chamberlain - editor, reading from his book "*A Wild Land Ethic; The Story of Wilderness in Montana*"



Read more about our speakers online.

Browse to:

[bchmt.org/wp/flathead/50-years](http://bchmt.org/wp/flathead/50-years)

and click on "Speakers."



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Upper Clark Fork BCH  
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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](http://bchmt.org)

