



Photo by Kari Schiffman, Bitter Root BCH

Decker Dispatch



Mentoring for the Future

By Christian Rohloff,
Charlie Russell Back Country Horsemen

Being elected Charlie Russell chapter president at 32, I joked to my wife that I may be the only chapter president to ever be younger than the chapter itself. Luckily that notion was dispelled at the state convention with a few other chapter presidents being in similar life stages.

As president, I do not think my priorities are much different than anyone else's in a leadership role throughout BCH. At the forefront is member engagement and bridging the generational gap. Unfortunately, it seems Charlie Russell is not the only chapter facing this conundrum. How do we go about attracting members to actively participate, while also being in the busiest stage of life?

Shortly after moving to Great Falls, my wife and I joined CRBCH to learn local trails and the basics of mountain riding. We did not own a trailer and had zero mountain experience, but both knew how to ride and had good-minded horses. After an awkward first carpool to the Flescher Pass CDT trailhead, we were able to cross a bucket list item off: trail riding in the Rockies. That could have been our one and only ride with BCH except for a few members stepping up and taking us under wing as mentees for the next several years.

Our story is not unique in the fact that we were wanting to learn trails and improve our skills. Unfortunately, member retention has proven difficult. Visiting with others and reflecting on my own experience has made me realize how im-



portant mentorship is to our future success. For me, the mentorship and now friendships that developed have led me to chapter leadership.

It will look different for each chapter and even mentor/mentee but being intentional is the key. Identify what each individual hopes to gain from the chapter. Regularly reaching out and helping to educate them will lead to greater activation and retention.

I challenge you to transform your thinking to become mentors for the future of 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.

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Why do I ride with BCH?

By John Mutter, Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen



John Mutter riding Jack.

Why do I ride with BCH? The reasons are many, so I'll start at the beginning.

I was born a city kid from that state you're not supposed to be from. I always wanted a horse, but our family simply could not afford one. In those days there were riding stables where a person could rent a saddle horse by the hour. There was a stable near my home, close enough that I could ride my bicycle to it. That's where I got my first chance to ride a bit. I couldn't afford much, but occasionally, throughout my childhood and into my teen years, my friends and I would rent horses for an afternoon. Then came a stint in the Air Force after which I moved to Mammoth Lakes and became a ski bum. It was there that I learned the value of horses in the back country.

There was and still is a packing outfit in Red's Meadow. I'd done a lot of back packing while I was in the Boy Scouts and all through high school but didn't really want to carry everything on my back anymore. A friend had an Appaloosa that was too old to ride but was otherwise sound. The folks down in Red's Meadow encouraged me to load my back pack gear onto that horse and "head out". So I did, on foot. We went up and down the John Muir Trail all summer long. That would be the end of my contact with horses for the next 20

years.

In 1994 my wife Barbara and I moved to Montana from Santa Cruz. We wanted to get away from what California was becoming and live a more rural lifestyle. But in the back of my mind I secretly wanted a place where I could live my dream of having my own horse.

After settling into a little ten acre place, some friends loaned us two decent saddle horses to keep on our little pasture. We rode them in the hills around our home in Clarkston for almost two years before we had to give them back.

In 1996 we bought our current place in Three Forks and by the end of the next year we owned our first two horses. Now it's a funny thing living where we do. It seems that every single horse owner around here either uses their horses for working cows or they ride. The last thing they want to do is ride "just for fun". So, finding anyone to ride with is difficult.

It was at a horse safety clinic at the Circle L Arena that we were introduced to the Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen. Now here was a group of experienced horse people who seemed to have a purpose for riding, liked riding, and just enjoyed being in the mountains with their stock. We joined right then, on the spot!

[continued on page 3]

Letter from the Chair

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

2023 has been busy already!

The snow is just now coming out of the hills but a lot has already happened in 2023. Thank you again to all of the hard working members of the Flathead chapter who put on an amazing convention and celebration of 50 years of BCH. It is always fun to get together with old friends and to meet new ones. I have to confess that as much as I enjoyed all of the socializing, my favorite part of convention was getting to watch all of the mules in the regional pack string. Those mules and I are all ready to hit the trail. On the national scene our own Mark Himmel has been elected to the Chair of BCH of America. Congratulations Mark and thank you for all you do for this organization! Mark doesn't just fill a chair; he truly sets an example of hard work and dedication to keeping BCH strong. Dates have been set for the summer rendezvous at Monture guard station. We will be there June 23-25 this year. Thank you to the Mission Valley chapter and the Kisers for organizing this and also a big thank you to Mike and Trish Foster for offering to feed us again! Check out the flyer for details.

With the snow melt it is time for all of us to hit the trail. The state wide volunteer agreement is in place. This significantly



reduces the amount of paperwork that needs done for our work projects. Make sure you sign the 301b form for the forest service before you start doing trail work. The challenge cost share is in the process of being put into place to reimburse members for miles they drive for work on the national forest. Please get with your chapter's leadership for the paperwork and start early keeping track of all of your vehicle miles for the summer. Those miles add up quickly. The cost share goes a long ways to help offset the tough fuel prices we have right now.

Most importantly I hope you all spend some quality time getting your animals ready for the riding season. They need a mental tune up and they also need to be in shape physically for what you are going to ask them to do. Spend some quality time with them now so you can enjoy the trails all summer. I hope to see you at Monture.

Wade

Contact Wade at murphywade923@gmail.com

Why do I ride with BCH? [continued]

Our first outing with Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen was with Dan Porter when he led a ride from the Cash Creek trailhead over Inspiration Ridge and around through McAtte Basin, then back up Indian Creek to the trailhead again. All and all it was about 24 miles. Our horses were tired, we were tired, and we had sore butts but what a way to find out about our group. Barb and I were both hooked.

I was still working at the time but on occasion I would take a day off to go on a trail crew. I got to know Larry Thomas and Rich Inman and all the others. They taught me what trail work was all about. They made me feel more than welcome. They made me feel useful and in the process I learned an awful lot about horsemanship. I've taken lessons, gone to clinics, watched the videos and read the books, but nothing compares to actually using your horse to do a job.

I forget the year but the club decided to offer a packing clinic to the public. Rich Inman and Clark Kinney asked if I wanted to be a part of it. Of course, being overly eager and twice as naive, I said yes. My only experience to that point was that single summer, 20+

years earlier leading a pack horse on foot. I guess you can say I got to attend that clinic "on the job". Anyway, after that and working with the 4H kids later, I figured out how to tie stuff on a horse the right way. It's been 27 years since I joined our club and I've cleared literally hundreds of miles of trails. I've had the opportunity to pack into the Wilderness for extended trips multiple times and to even lead my own trail crew.

I recently attended the 50th anniversary celebration and BCHMT convention. I feel immense pride, not just belonging to an organization that has done so much and for so long, but actually being a productive part of it.

If you've never ridden with a trail

crew, I highly recommend it. Even if you feel like you have nothing to contribute to the work, you can always be a horse holder. The experience will, without a doubt, broaden your horizons. If you've never been on a pack trip, go on one with us. It's the best way to learn, bar none!

I realize that I'm not the best equestrian in the world, but I feel competent and completely capable in the mountains with my horses. This never would have been the case if not for the Back Country Horsemen. They gave me a reason to ride and a sense of purpose.

I'll be forever grateful for the Back Country Horsemen. They literally made my dream come true!

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
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.

National Director's Report

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

What an event. On Friday, April 14th, all the state directors and officers of Back Country Horsemen of Montana met in Kalispell, to attend the first of two business meetings—one prior to our annual State Convention and the other immediately after.

The first meeting would also kick off the 50th anniversary of Back Country Horsemen of America, which was founded 50 years ago in the Flathead Valley of Montana. This meeting would be followed by the Back Country Horsemen of America's annual national board of directors meeting, also held in Kalispell, Montana. The theme of these meetings would be the past, present, and future of Back Country Horsemen of America.

Following the post BCHMT meeting, BCHA National Directors Mark Himmel, John Chepulis and Alternate National Director Brad Pollman headed to the Red Lion Hotel in Kalispell to register for the National Board Meeting. Our wives, Sandy, Bonnie, Nancy and Bonnie Kiser helped Michelle Wade with manning the BCHA store, taking meal tickets and accepting silent and live auction items for the auction to be held after the banquet on Wednesday evening. Scott Kiser would help with the sound system and microphones at the meeting.

On Sunday afternoon, all directors gathered for a national directors orientation, along with information concerning Roberts Rules of Order and meeting format, who does what, how it's run and what's permitted, presented by Past Chairman and Parliamentarian Darrel Wallace. Following the presentation, all the committee chairs met for a short meeting with BCHA Chair Sherry Copeland. This was followed by a welcome reception and campfire talks with guest speakers.

NATIONAL BOARD MEETING NOTES: Monday April 17:

The annual meeting of BCHA was called to order with a welcome, Honor Guard and Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call was called and a quorum was established.

Freddy Dunn, chair of the Expan-

sion Committee gave the first report and the State of Texas was voted in as the newest state to join BCHA.

Motion and second to accept the agenda as presented, motion passed.

Motion and second to accept the consent agenda, which were the executive committee reports and national directors' call notes for the past year, motion passed.

Sherry Copeland, Chair, gave a report of the State of BCHA. She reported we now have 12,160 members, 198 chapters, and are located in 32 states.

The treasurer's report and proposed budget were presented by Latifa Rodriquez, BCHA treasurer. The proposed budget will be voted on Wednesday.

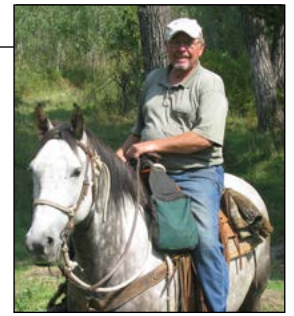
All committees reported on 2022-2023 committee happenings—Media/Marketing, Membership, Education, Partnerships, Youth, Public Lands, Volunteer Hours, Chapter Support Grants, and Nominations.

The Nominating Committee presented their slate of nominees as follows: Chair - Mark Himmel (MT), Vice Chair - Craig Ferdig (AZ), Treasurer - Kathy Young (WA), EC Director - Jim Allen (SD), EC Non Director - Freddy Dunn (UT). The Chair opted to take other nominations from the floor for the non-director position as well. Greg Schatz, BCH Flathead, Montana, was nominated for the non-director position on the Executive Committee.

Reports were given by Michelle Wade, Executive Administrator; Randy Rasmussen, Director of Public Lands; and Mark Himmel, Contract Review Committee. Mark recommended a 25% increase in pay to Michelle Wade due to her consistently going over her contracted hours; recommended a \$5,000.00 per year increase in pay for Randy Rasmussen for the next three consecutive years; and recommended keeping Washington Accounting Services to do our monthly booking and yearly taxes.

Motion and second to accept the treasurer's report as presented. After some discussion, motion passed.

Three resolutions from Oregon and two from Wyoming were presented.



After arguments for and against the resolutions, a vote will take place on Wednesday.

Motion and second to make minor changes in the partnerships section of the Governance Policy, motion passed.

After breaking for dinner, we reconvened at 7:00 pm to break into Strategic Business Plan working groups consisting of service, marketing, media & website, partnership & advocacy, financial & fundraising, education, youth & membership.

Tuesday April 18:

BCHA—Past, Present & Future

Past BCHA chairs were welcomed and gave talks on pre- and post-governance policy and executive committee eras. Timelines were posted on the walls and were talked about from the beginning of BCHA in 1973 to the present time, along with the evolution of the Public Lands Committee. Most of the present discussion was moved to Wednesday as there was so much information to hear about and learn from.

Wednesday April 19:

Director of Public Lands Randy Rasmussen gave a report on Hike the Hill and the importance of having other BCHA members there to be "Boots on the Ground" telling their stories.

Public Lands Chair Brad Pollman reported on communication from the chapter level to national and on working together.

Vice Chair Mark Himmel gave a report on the U.S. Forest Saw Program and its success.

Unfinished business - resolutions were discussed and votes taken; two out of the five passed. They are: Oregon's Reminder of Mission Statement and Wyoming's COLA resolution.

Strategic Business Plan: After much discussion, changes, corrections, additions and deletions will be made and

National Director's Report [continued]

the Executive Committee will have final approval.

Proposed Budget Discussion & Approval: After discussion on the newsletter, fundraising budget, and dues increase, the budget was approved, limiting the newsletter to two publications per year, one digital and one printed. Some funds were added to some committees had no funds, and funds were increased for travel expenses for those attending Hike the Hill.

DUES INCREASE – After much discussion the past several days, ignited by one of the Wyoming resolutions, dues need to be increased. The last increase was in 2013.

Motion and second to increase the dues by \$5.00. That motion was amended to increase it by \$10.00, which was voted down. The motion for \$5.00 passed. This motion needs to go back to all 32 states and be ratified by three-fourths. If you are in favor, why not send in the increased amount when you receive the 2023 dues invoice? Otherwise, this will be passed or rejected at our April 2024 National Board Meeting and will go into effect in January 2025.

FINAL NOMINATIONS and ELECTIONS: There were no additional nominations from the floor. Congratulations to our newly elected officers:

Chairman-Mark Himmel, MT
Vice Chairman-Craig Ferdig, AZ
Treasurer-Kathy Young, WA
EC Director-Jim Allen, SD
EC Non Director-Greg Schatz, MT

NEXT MEETING: April 2024 will be in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

John

Contact John at:
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2022 was a busy year for the Three Rivers chapter

By Graeme McDougal, Three Rivers Back Country Horsemen

We successfully held the Back Country Horsemen State Convention on the campus of the University of Montana Western. The food was excellent and our efforts were heartily supported by many local businesses including the donations of all of the raffle prizes. Thank you, Dillon and Beaverhead County!

We had many pleasurable rides starting out with a ride in Sandy Hollow north of the Big Hole River. It was an easy ride that wasn't very difficult, a perfect way to start the season. That was followed quickly by member Melissa Owen's Ice Cream Social, always one of the season's premier events. For the ride we toured Limekiln Canyon in the Tendoy Mountains. At both rides a member was riding his new mule purchased at the Salmon Select Sale.

July came and we got busy with projects and events. We started off with three members packing in a Forest Service trail crew to the upper end of the Nicholia Creek trail, packing their camp supplies and tools. The trail crew spent ten days working on the Nicholia-Deadman trail with some work on the Continental Divide trail in that area. At the end of ten days, we returned to pack their camp and tools back out to the trailhead. This was a very successful endeavor.

Following this project, the Three Rivers chapter made its annual appearance during the Bannack Days celebration. We provided several packing demonstrations and told the Back Country Horsemen story to numerous individuals. This is an always enjoyable for our chapter. Inevitably Bannack Days is always on the hottest weekend in July!

Several members helped to pack in a trail maintenance crew for Wild Montana into the East Pioneer Mountains. This is an ongoing project now for the past three years as Wild Montana has diligently worked to maintain and upgrade the Forest Service trails in the Lake Abundance-Crescent Lake areas. This effort came off without a hitch and



We packed in a Forest Service trail crew to this site. Italian Peak is in the center and Nicholia Creek is just out of site to the left.

we all had a good time. A week later we came back and packed out the crew's camp and tools. Thank you everyone and the Wild Montana trail crew for keeping these trails easily and safely useable.

Late summer and fall came along and there were several more day rides for the pleasure of riding in the mountains and looking at the scenery. We also had an overnight ride in the Snowcrest Mountains while camping at the East Fork of Blacktail campground. Riding in the Snowcrest Mountains is always a great pleasure and this trip was no different. No grizzly bears were encountered.

Summer came to an end and hunting season and winter were upon us. Winter lasted quite a bit longer than it has in the last several years! Spring has sprung now and it is time to get out and get ourselves and our stock in shape for another season of rides and projects! Our first ride, a return to Sandy Hollow, is coming soon.

Thank You!

Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead thanks you for your support of the 50th anniversary celebration of BCH. We appreciate all who attended and helped put on this special event in the Flathead.

Safety Moment

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



You are a horse trainer!

Did you know that you are a horse and mule trainer? It's true. Anyone who interacts with horses and mules is in the act of training them anytime they are with them. Sometimes that is good. Sometimes that is bad. The way we act around our animals on a daily basis has a very direct impact on their behavior and on their understanding of the human / equine relationship. They are a reflection of you and how you act. Do you show your animal firm and kind leadership? Are you aggressive and overpowering? Are you soft and allow your animals to push you around? Every single minute you spend with your animals sets the tone for how they act and respond.

One thing to always remember is that our horses are prey animals. They all have some level of fear inside them. Our job as riders is to build their confidence as we interact with them. When we are loud and aggressive with them they often become more and more nervous. When we show leadership in a kind and fair manner they quickly gain confidence. Horses and mules crave leadership. It is very important that you establish a leadership role with them. The easiest way to do this is to regularly move their feet around. I like to move my animals around every time I am around them. I will simply back them up a little or move their front end away from me a couple of steps. Calm but firm. The more you do this the more they will view you as their herd boss. When I ride I try to have continual communication with my animal. I like to be as quiet with my cues as possible, but constantly giving directions. A mistake some riders make is to climb on and just become a passenger on the trail. A few



Wade Murphy presented two seminars at the recent 50th anniversary celebration of BCH in Kalispell. Here Wade provides listeners with great ideas for preparing their horse or mule to hit the trail. Wade focused primarily on ground work on Friday and work under saddle on Saturday.

miles down the trail the horse hasn't been given any signals so they start to make up their own ideas of where they should go and how fast to get there. We all have challenges along the way with our animals. As you ride this summer and have challenges with your mount, ask yourself what you can do differently to get a better response. Sometimes it is more pressure, sometimes it is less pressure. Sometimes they just need a little more time to figure out what you are asking them to do. Listen to them and learn from them. They are all a little different in what it takes to make them a quiet, safe trail partner.

I'll be doing a free 3-hour clinic at Monture on Friday, June 23, for the first ten BCH members to sign up. Both horses and mules are welcome. See the

Monture flyer for details.

Safe and happy trails.

Wade

406-431-1717

murphywade923@gmail.com

Free 3-hour clinic
at Monture
on Friday, June 23
for the first ten
BCH members
to sign up -
Contact Wade

Youth Packing Summer Camp

AUGUST 10-13

JOIN US THIS
SUMMER AT INDIAN
MEADOWS AND
LEARN HOW TO
PACK STOCK IN
THE
BACKCOUNTRY!

Open to ages
14-17



--- EXPERIENCE DEEP MONTANA
WILDERNESS CAMPING

--- LEARN ABOUT TRAIL
CONSTRUCTION

--- PRACTICE HANDS-ON STOCK
MANAGEMENT

--- SWIMMING, FISHING, AND
CAMPFIRES

--- MAKE LIFELONG FRIENDS
AND MEMORIES



Applications can be found at
[https://bchmt.org/wp/flathead/
bchmt-youth-program/](https://bchmt.org/wp/flathead/bchmt-youth-program/)



Montana BCH Annual Rendezvous June, 23-25, 2023 Monture Ranger Station



*~ **Rendezvous** ~
To Gather, to Meet Up,
to Reconnect with Old Friends
and to Meet Some New Ones.*

Join us for the Annual Rendezvous of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana at the Monture Guard Station. Bring your horse, mule, family and friends. Ride the trails, share a meal, learn some new things, visit around the campfire and camp over for the weekend.



Tentative Schedule

Thursday: Arrive and Ride on your own

Friday: Ride the trails on your own

2-5 pm Wade Murphy's Horseback clinic

*Limited to 12 riders Friday,
Contact Wade to reserve your space.
406-431-1717*

wadeandlonnie@hotmail.com

No-Host Campfire Gathering

Saturday: Morning on your own

2-4 pm Wade's Groundwork Clinic

4:30 pm - Light On The Land -

Awareness Course by Mack Long

6 pm - Group BBQ & Stories at Campfire

Sunday: Go for a Ride then head home.

Free Camping and Clinics

with

\$10 Catered BBQ- Sat. 6pm

Must purchase by June 17, 2023

Send check for dinner to:

BCHMT Monture Rendezvous
2130 9th St. W. #9
Columbia Falls, MT 59912

More Info. Mission Valley BCH

Scott Kiser-406-260-8398

Mark Potter-406-250-3965



Watch for more details as we get closer to Rendezvous!!!

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Wild Horse Plains BCH
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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



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