



Photo by Kari Schiffman, Bitter Root BCH

Decker Dispatch



Beartooth BCH provides pack support for Absarokee-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation

By John Jenkins, Beartooth Back Country Horsemen

The Beartooth BCH provides pack support for the Absarokee-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation (ABWF). This foundation is a non-profit that supports the Absarokee-Beartooth Wilderness (ABW) in southern Montana including public education about wilderness and trail maintenance.

The Beartooth BCH has provided horse and mule packing support for the ABWF for years for their trail maintenance and other wilderness projects. One such project in 2023 was a backcountry wilderness weed eradication project. This project involved a group of outdoor enthusiast college students from Schreiner University in Texas. This is an ongoing "volunteer work/wilderness education" collaboration between the ABWF and Schreiner, which is also coordinated with the USFS, and of course, with the Beartooth BCH for pack support.

Beartooth BCH packers arrived a day early on July 5 at the Fourmile trailhead up the main Boulder River. The ABWF staff and the volunteer college students arrived the next morning. After a brief safety discussion about our stock, a group of 11 was packed in several miles to Meatrack Meadows in the heart of the Absarokee-Beartooth Wilderness. Five packers and ten pack animals got the crew and gear in on a rainy wet day. But we dried out by the time we returned to the trail-



head at the end of the day. The meadow is large and about a half-mile long straddling Meatrack Creek. Two other trails join in this meadow as well as a third unmarked trail. It's tough to find your way out on these other trails unless you have a general idea where they are located, as

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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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Beartooth BCH provides pack support [continued from front page]

By John Jenkins, Beartooth Back Country Horsemen

they are not well marked. The trail in to Meatrack was washed out in the floods of 2022 and is very poor in some places. This year, even though the trail was supposedly cleared, we also had to put some effort into clearing it going in, and again on the pack out five days later.

The college crew learned about this northern Yellowstone ecosystem. On this project they pulled weeds, chiefly houndstongue and some thistle, and brushed trail. In past years the group (different students each year) from Schreiner have done a combination of trail maintenance (e.g., water bars, brushing) and weed pulls in this area. This is a large, scenic and popular area in the ABW because of the hunting, fishing and camping it

offers with relatively easy access by riding or hiking in just one day – that is, if you survive the 17-mile drive on the main Boulder Road to the trailhead. So weed maintenance here prevents spread throughout the remainder of the ABW.

Our pack out crew returned to the trailhead on July 10. With a new crew, we arose early the next morning, saddled our stock and rode into the meadow to pack out the crew. The volunteers in these trail crews always appreciate our help, and often, with some guidance and instruction, help us on the packing, weighing and loading and unloading. This enhances their often first time experience in western wilderness areas. And, of course, we appreciate the work the volunteers do to maintain the trails we ride.

Rewarding Members for Milestones Achieved

By Rick Mathies, NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen

The NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen chapter was founded in 2015. Our guiding principles include the historical BCH mission to perpetuate the use of horses in the back country and to help government agencies manage and protect the resource. Our vision is to pass on what we know to the next generation by being family and kid friendly.

We quickly became aware that there was a need to recognize the achievements of new and younger members as they progress and learn to pack and work as volunteers to support our mission.

In 2017 we started a program called “Milestone Awards”. These awards recognize those members who have achieved a goal or done one of the following for the first time.

We have given awards for the following: First Trail Project, First Event Volunteer, First Time Camping with Stock, First Time working with SNOTEL, First All Ladies Pack Trip, First Time Volunteering for a Fundraiser, First Time in a Wilderness (Bob Marshall, Great Bear, Scapegoat, Mission Mountain), First Time Packing in a Wilderness, First Time Packing Planks, First Time Packing on Their Own (Kids- Next Generation Packers), First Time Packing, First Overnight Pack Trip, Packing Stock (First Time Packing Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven), Trail & Packing Leaders, and Trail & Packing Staff.

We also give an annual President’s Award to an outstanding volunteer who is picked by the president.



The awards do not cost a lot of money. We give a chapter logo patch for the first award received. Then after that they receive a patch of the “Milestone”, like “Packing One”. The member can then sew that patch on their favorite jacket or coat.

From 2017 through 2022 we have given 179 awards (patches). This recognizes our newest and youngest members and shows that we as a chapter sincerely appreciate them stepping up and volunteering to meet our goals and mission.

It is hard to measure the impact, but everyone seems to feel appreciated and to anticipate the next round of awards.

It is important to make sure that everyone, especially the new members, feel welcome and included. If we don’t truly bring the new members into the fold, include them in the conversations, mentor them when needed and bring them along, we risk losing them because they don’t know what we know.

Letter from the Chair

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

Well, these two years as your chairman of this great organization have flown by. At the convention in March at Fairmont Hot Springs I will be termed out. It is time to step aside and make room for new leadership with new ideas. Change is good. It has truly been a privilege to serve you in this position.

There are a lot of great things happening in our organization and there also continues to be challenges. Quite a few of our chapters are struggling with membership numbers. There are even talks happening about possible chapter mergers. I would like to encourage you all to focus on the health of your chapters. Take care of your members.

2024 looks like it will be a crazy year in politics. Along with a highly volatile presidential election we will also have a Montana US Senate position on the ballot. There will certainly be millions of dollars flowing into our state from both parties to try to control the US Senate. The truth will be hard to find underneath all the nasty politics. I am already tired of the political battles and this year has only begun.

I encourage all of you to help make BCHMT a fun place to be. Let's make our meetings and gatherings a place where peo-

ple can come to get away from the hassles of a major election year. Let's stay laser focused on our mission. Focus on keeping our public lands open to horses. Focus on our membership. Focus on responsible stock use. Focus on our future members of all ages. Find someone to mentor. Find a member who needs a hand and help them out. Reach out to a neighboring chapter and lend a hand. Keep it fun.

Most importantly, take care of you! We are part of this organization because of our common love for horses and mules. "Take care of you" by prioritizing saddle time. Take the ride you have been putting off. Go on that pack trip that you have been dreaming of. Go explore that trail that you have been wondering about. Let's have a great 2024!!

I hope to see you soon at Fairmont.

Wade

Contact Wade at murphywade923@gmail.com



Montana Matters - Youth Outdoor Experience

By Kathy Hundley, Selway-Pintler Wilderness BCH

On Saturday, May 6, 2023, the public was invited to join over 30 outdoor, wildlife and conservation-based organizations for a day packed with learning, prizes and fun!

The event was held at the Ravalli County Fairgrounds in Hamilton, MT and was formerly known as the Teller Youth Expo. The highlight of the day is where youth, ages 14-17, can win a chance to attend camps held around the state, all paid through grants and donations.

The Selway-Pintler Wilderness BCH chapter has been one of the 30 conservation/volunteer organizations who participate in the event since its beginning in 2013. This year's event was made even more special by the presence of the Nine Mile Pack Train.

Winners have attended our BCHMT Indian Meadows Youth Packing Camp, Montana Matters Magruder Camp, and Boone and Crockett Club's Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch Outdoor Adventure Camp west of Dupuyer, MT.

At these camps, students are introduced to the skill of horse and mule

packing, horsemanship, safety, Light on the Land, and the beauty and special place we call the back country!

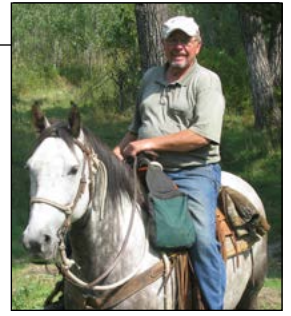


National Director's Report

Comparing Volunteer Hours 2019 vs. 2023, pre-Covid vs. after Covid, I found some interesting facts between these two years.

	2019	2023	% Change
Basic Hours	5916	4248	-28%
Skilled hours:	6591	4856	-26%
Recon Hours:	665	568	-14%
Education:	2915	2752	-05%
Public Meetings:	2219	606	-72%
Admin:	3827	1720	-55%
Travel Time:	4358	3431	-21%
Wilderness Miles:	567	628	+10%
Other Miles	1441	1886	+30%
Personal Miles	74,858	58,020	-22%
Stock Hauling	64,379	59,693	-07%
Power Equip:	667	328	-50%
Heavy Equip:	73	23	-68%
Stock Days	1889	1893	+002%
Donations:	8154	6472	-20%
Total \$ Value:	\$1,115,930	\$980,040	-12%

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



Interesting figures, food for thought, what are your conclusions? Let's talk about this during Convention.

John

Contact John at:
barcdiamond@gmail.com

Backcountry Horsemen of America Volunteer Hours Report – Montana January 2023 thru September 2023				
	P1 Totals	Rate per hour/mile/day	Total Value	
Total Basic Hours	4248	\$31.80	\$135,086.40	Calculated per hour
Total Skilled Hours	4856	\$47.70	\$231,631.20	Calculated per hour
Total Trail Recon Hours	568	\$31.80	\$18,070.35	Calculated per hour
Total LNT - Education	2752	\$31.80	\$87,497.70	Calculated per hour
Total Public Meetings	606	\$31.80	\$19,270.80	Calculated per hour
Total Administrative Service	1720	\$31.80	\$54,696.00	Calculated per hour
Total Travel Time	3431	\$31.80	\$109,102.62	Calculated per hour
Total Hours	18181			
Wilderness Trail Miles	628			
Other Trail Miles	1886			
Total Trail Miles	2514			
Personal Vehicle	58020	\$0.62	\$35,972.40	Calculated per mile
Stock Hauling	59693	\$1.35	\$80,585.55	Calculated per mile
Total Travel Miles	117713			
Power Equipment	328	\$30.00	\$9,825.00	Calculated per hour
Heavy Equipment	23	\$110.00	\$2,530.00	Calculated per hour
Total Equipment Hours	351			
Total Stock (Pack and Saddle)	1326			
Total Stock Days	1893	\$100.00	\$189,300.00	Calculated per day
Total Donations	\$6,472.19		\$6,472.19	
		Total	\$980,040.21	



YOUTH PACKING CAMP

AUGUST 8-11

Open to ages
14-17

JOIN THE BACK
COUNTRY HORSEMEN
OF MONTANA IN **THE
SCAPEGOAT
WILDERNESS** FOR 3
NIGHTS AND 4 DAYS
TO LEARN THE ART
OF HORSE AND MULE
PACKING



Meet at Indian Meadows Guard Station

Hands-on professional stock management and packing education

Hike to a backcountry campsite

Learn about trail restoration in conjunction with The USFS

Swimming
Fishing
Camping



Contact us at bchmt.youth@gmail.com
for more information

Or visit our website at
bchmt.org/wp/flathead/bchmt-youth-program/



Safety Moment

By Wade Murphy, Circle Cross Equine

Maintaining leadership in the winter

Do you struggle to find ways to keep your animals tuned up in the winter and maintain your leadership role in the herd? It is a common struggle that many people have in climates like Montana with our long winters. In the fall, after a long riding season, the herd is always so calm and well behaved. In the spring, after a long winter out to pasture, it can be frustrating dealing with animals that are fresh and want to challenge your leadership.

With the cold, dark days of winter it is usually challenging to find quality saddle time to keep your horse tuned up. The more time they spend without being caught and handled, the more you will struggle with them in the spring.

I solve this problem with groundwork. I have found that there is a lot of value in regular winter groundwork. Winter groundwork is practical because it can be done fairly quickly. It is not how long you spend doing the

groundwork that matters, it is how often. Working 10-15 minutes a day, 2-3 times a week, does an amazing job of keeping your horse in the proper mind set.

Here is my routine:

- Catch them calmly. Get them used to being caught without a bunch of drama and chasing. Make it pleasant for them. The more often you catch them the better they will be at it.
- Spend about 5-10 minutes on simple ground exercises. I ask them to walk a centered circle around me. I roll their hind end away from me. I push their front end through to send them in the opposite direction. Do this 5-6 times in each direction until they are quiet and calm. Quiet and calm is my whole focus. When they are quiet and calm, I roll the hind quarters away and let them stop and stand. I usually take a little time to do some soft backing. I want them light and soft.
- With younger horses or mules I will

often take a minute or two to work them from a corral rail to remind them about having someone above them.

- After a few quick exercises I will tie them for a couple hours while I work another animal or go inside to warm up.

The simple act of catching them and moving their feet reaffirms your leadership in your relationship. With regular groundwork spread throughout the winter it is normally very easy to saddle up and have calm quality rides early in the spring.

The warm weather will be back before we know it. Take the time now to work with your animals so you can get in the saddle as soon as possible in the spring.

Ride safe.

Wade

Circle Cross Equine

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Recognition, Well Deserved

By John Errecart, Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen

Lolo National Forest's West Zone (Superior and Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger Districts) Recreation Program received the 2023 Regional Forester Honor Award for Interdependence, Partnership, and Public Engagement.

In November of 2023 the Lolo National Forest released the following:

"The West Zone Recreation Program on the Lolo National Forest received the Regional Forester Honor Award because of their exemplary work with volunteers, youth crews and interns. This program embodies the Forest Service's core values of service, conservation, interdependence, diversity, and safety.

The Superior, Plains and Thompson Falls Ranger Districts manage an impeccable recreation program with support from volunteers, Youth Conservation Crews, Montana Conservation Corps interns and Forest Service employees. The program creates diverse

natural resource experiences across disciplines to engage future employees in meaningful work; fostering interdependence, empowering them to learn from one another, and investing in relationships by providing a positive work environment where both employees and volunteers are valued.

The following employees were recognized for their exemplary work within the Forest's West Zone Recreation Program: Heather Berman: Recreation Staff Lead, Mikey Church: Plains Trails Manager, Nancy Parkin: Developed Recreation Rachel Ryan: Superior Trails Manager, and Leigh Wexler: Recreation Special Uses Administrator."

For many of us the Forest Service recreation program brings to mind developed campgrounds and trails. Though correct, the Lolo West Zone recreation program also includes dispersed recreation; nine cabin rentals and maintenance, two Youth Conser-

vation Corp programs (YCC), issuance/compliance of special use permits, project NEPA input/reports and volunteer coordination. The volume, variety and duration of the volunteer program on the Lolo West Zone alone exemplify their commitment to involving the public in the management of public lands and facilities. The robust Lolo West Zone volunteer program includes a variety of groups including: Runner's Edge, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Thompson Falls Trails Committee, Cube Iron - Cataract Coalition, Montana Night Riders Snowmobile Club, Great Burn Conservation Alliance, Montana Conservation Corps (MCC), Bitterroot Good Sam Club, FS volunteers (20-25 annually), West End ATV Club, Team Rubicon, Friends of Savenac, Mission Valley and Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen. One can only imagine the complexity

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and patience required coordinating so many volunteer groups, but the Lolo West Zone Recreation Program does it, and does it very well.

From our on-the-ground perspective, the Wild Horse Plains Back Country Horsemen (WHPBCH) chapter feels the award is much deserved. Locally, we've known for some time we're fortunate to have the individuals making up the Forest Service Recreation Department on the Plains/TFalls Ranger District. Together, Heather Berman (Rec. staff) and Mikey Church (Plains/TFalls Trails Manager), continually provide our chapter the support and service that results in a mutually beneficial relationship. Be it conducting or arranging First Aid/CPR or chainsaw certifications, to providing project safety equipment and supplies, to obtaining Challenge Cost Share Agreements, to requests for packing support, or to obtaining pledges for financial and in-kind support of grants (e.g. Recreational Trails Program - RTP, Resource Advisory Committee - RAC, Burned Area Emergency Response - BAER, Summer Motorized Trail Pass -SMTP, Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Information, Education & Outreach -IGBC/IEO, etc.) that they aggressively seek.

We truly admire their commitment to obtaining grants, though it adds significantly to their already heavy workload. By successfully securing grants they are able to hire more seasonal employees, fund more YCC programs, and fund many more on-the-ground projects. Rightfully so, Heather and Mikey are proud of the high number of grant funded projects they've accomplished on the ground to provide or improve recreation opportunities for the public. But, they are the first to point out the real on-the-ground work is accomplished by the seasonal employees, MCC and YCC crews. If you've ever come back to camp after a day of swinging a Pulaski digging tread, with your arms dragging on the ground, you know why they praise and credit their employees so much.

Heather and Mikey always deliver and are an impressive pair of public servants that set the bar high for service to the taxpaying public. We at WHPBCH acknowledge and thank them for their highest quality service.

Pic1: Regional Forester Honor Award recipients (Nov. 2023). Front Row (L-R) Rachel Ryan, Lindsay Civin, Heather Berman (green sweater/knit hat), Leanne Marten (Regional Forester); Middle Row (L-R) Mikey Church (glasses/black vest), Allison Warth, Claire Burtrum; Back Row (L-R) Nick Hoeven, Leigh Wexler and Alex Lasher. Not pictured Nancy Parkin.

Pic2: Cribbing being installed on the River Trail (#223) between Paradise and St. Regis by MCC and Forest Service crews. Funding via RTP grant and WHPBCH in-kind match.

Pic3: MCC crewmembers lead WHPBCH stock the ½ mile from the gravel source to the trail cribbing on the River Trail (#223).

Pic4: WHPBCH on their way to pack out the spike camp meet part of the MCC crew heading out after their nine day hitch near Cube Iron Pass north of Thompson Falls (BAER funded).

Pic5: YCC, MCC and WHPBCH crews working together retreading a trail on the Plains/TFalls Ranger District (RTP Funded).



Schedule for chapter news article submissions.

Submit 400-500 words, photos in separate .jpg files (not in Word)

E-mail to: 1caseywaldrop@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.

2023 was a busy year for the Three Rivers chapter

By Graeme McDougal, Three Rivers Back Country Horsemen

2023 was a busy year for the Three Rivers BCH chapter with numerous projects with partners and several enjoyable rides for the group.

We started out with the chapter's ride at Sandy Hollow north of the Notch Bottom. This ride is pleasurable and easy, a great way for riders and horses to get broke in for the upcoming season.

The highlight for this rider is a look off the Notch Bottom buffalo jump.

The next ride was at the request of the Beaverhead County weed supervisor. It was a survey of noxious weeds in Straight Creek, a tributary of Little Sheep Creek in the southern Tendency Mountains. The ride revealed several infestations of spotted knapweed and houndstongue. GPS locations were turned into the County Weed Board.

The next chapter event was the annual ice cream social hosted by chapter member Melissa Owen. We rode to the old feral horse trap in the Little Rockies, took some pictures, and returned to Melissa's for a feast of ice cream and cookies. The weather was very nice.

Our next project was in conjunction with the Madison Ranger District's Natural Resources Specialist Joel Sather. We were tasked with laying out horse facilities at the Cottonwood Campground on the Ruby River. Currently there are only a few old and decrepit hitch rails. We laid out plans for new hitch rails, holding pens, a trail to the river, and campsites with parking for horse trailers. A fantastic supper was prepared by the members who have mastered Dutch oven cooking. Every bite was a treat. The next day several members rode from the campground and rode a few miles of the Gilbert Sheep Trail on the east side of the Snowcrest Mountains.

Once again, the Three Rivers chapter was well represented at the annual Bannack Days celebration. The chapter did several packing demonstrations headed by member Dave Mathson and his mules. The mule train made several tours of Bannock and we distributed literature extolling the virtues of Back Country Horsemen.

The next big project was with the Dillon Ranger District's Recreation Specialist Adam Norlander. We replaced

the rotten and nearly non-existent hitch rails at the Blue Creek trailhead in the West Pioneers and the Sawtooth trailhead in the East Pioneers. The new hitch rails are steel set in concrete, so they should have an extended life expectancy. One of our members contributed a tractor with a posthole digger to the project so the digging was easy.

Another project was the retrieval of an abandoned hunting camp in the Madison District, Snowcrest Mountains. Four members with horses and pack animals worked on this and it was a full day. We removed approximately 600 pounds of everything from garbage to tarps, chairs, bed frames, cooking utensils, and a 55-gallon barrel stove. It was an interesting collection of refuse going down the trail to where the FS was going to pick up the gear and haul it to the ranger station.

Throughout the summer season several members engaged in trail reconnaissance work and a lot of clearing as rides were taken to various high mountain lakes. There were also rides with FS people surveying possible trail reroutes in the West Pioneers to avoid boggy, marsh areas.

We are all looking forward to the upcoming season to get back to riding in the back country and supporting our various agency partners.



Photos:
Hitch rail crew
Bannack Days
Horse trap
Abandoned camp



HI-YO-HO-HO - SANTA RIDES AGAIN AND AGAIN!!

By Karen Philips, Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen

On Nov 24th during the Christmas tree lighting ceremony in downtown Hamilton, Santa, accompanied by his elves, rode through the town's streets on his trusty mare Nikawa, delighting young and old alike! Children loved being near Santa and gentle Nikawa (her name is River Horse in the Osage language).

Thanks to Santa Ed Bullock, Mrs. Claus Jan Bullock, and elves Gene Merrill, Joan Scheffer, and Leslie and Dan Maiyo, for spreading joy to so many.

The event, in its second year, was sponsored by the Hamilton Downtown Association, in collaboration with Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen.



Pantry Partners Food Packing Event

By Karen Philips, Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen

For about 30 years, the Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen have packed food boxes for Pantry Partners in Stevensville!

On Thursday, November 30th, from 1-3 p.m. we assembled boxes and set food items out on tables.

On Friday, December 1st from 9-10 a.m. we filled, sealed and loaded 240 boxes in a trailer for delivery to the Pantry Partners' facility for distribution to those in need.

A big shout out to all that participated in this annual event! Thank You!



In the News

Feds seek public input on potentially opening millions of acres of Alaska wilderness lands

The federal Bureau of Land Management is seeking public input on the potential impacts of removing protections for 28 million acres of wilderness lands across Alaska. Read the document and make online comments before February 14th here: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2018002/530>

North American wolverine receives federal protection as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is announcing its final rule to list the distinct population segment of the North American wolverine in the contiguous U.S. as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

Read the document and make

online comments here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/11/30/2023-26206/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-threatened-species-status-with-section-4d-rule-for>

The Mile High & Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen chapters are super excited to present the 2024 BCHMT State Convention! [If you have not registered/reserved your rooms yet, you can still do so by clicking on the “upcoming event” link listed on our BCHMT homepage: <https://bchmt.org>.](#)



***Please don't wait as room rates expire in early February & meals need to be coordinated in early February as well with the resort.

WHERE: FAIRMONT HOTSPRINGS RESORT-1500 Fairmont Road, Fairmont, MT 406-797-3241

WHEN: MARCH 8, 9 & 10

ADDITIONAL CONVENTION INFORMATION FOR ALL CHAPTERS

CHAPTER DISPLAYS-Each chapter is invited to bring their own unique chapter display for public viewing. Please limit your display size to one half of a six foot table (2-1/2' x 3').

PHOTO SHOW OF YOUR CHAPTER'S 2023 ACTIVITIES-Each chapter is invited to send in up to 15 digital photo's highlighting your 2023 chapter activities. Please include a digital image of your chapter logo if possible and email submissions to: upperclarkforkbch@hotmail.com. You may also USPS mail submissions to: Mile High Back Country Horsemen, PO Box PO Box 4434, Butte, MT- 59701.

WALL OF HONOR SUBMISSIONS-Each chapter is invited to send in a digital photo and short paragraph (biography) for their members who have passed away in 2023. Please email directly to Bonnie Kiser by email at: bonniekiser@centurytel.net. Thank you Bonnie for organizing.

LIVE AUCTION ITEM DONATIONS-All chapters are reminded to bring one live auction item (worth \$100 or more) which provides the funding for the state (BCHMT). This is the primary fundraiser for BCHMT.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS-We are pleased to offer a variety of informational speakers on Saturday afternoon. Please see the short speaker biographies and topics that will be presented in this newsletter (or online at <https://bchmt.org>).

CROSSCUT SAW COMPETITION-Friday evening will be our saw competition & social gathering. Please join us for both of these activities.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER-Saturday evening the legendary Smoke Elser will provide us with some of the best stories we've ever heard from his outfitting days in the Bob Marshall Wilderness and a short reading from his book "[Hush of the Land](#)", soon to be released.

RAFFLE TICKETS-Chapter coordinators should bring ALL tickets (sold & unsold) & funds to the registration desk.

BASIC OVERVIEW OF 2024 CONVENTION EVENTS

FRIDAY-Convention registration check-in will be available; Photo Contest entries accepted; Chapter Display setup occurring; Vendor Setups occurring; intake of raffle tickets & live/silent auction items occurring; dinner on your own; followed by a Cash Bar/Crosscut Saw Competition & social time with music & dancing by Ken Rich from Butte, MT.

Friday at 10:30am-All senior state directors should plan to attend the nominating committee meeting; followed by the Pre-Convention Board Meeting (all state directors) beginning at 11:00am.

(*If you plan to eat on Friday in the Fairmont Resort dining room-please note that reservations are required & appreciated so they will have adequate staff to take care of everyone in a timely manner. Fairmont Resort also has a small café with first come/first serve seating that can accommodate a small number of people.)

SATURDAY-Begins with the breakfast buffet (ticket required); followed by opening ceremonies & the convention general session; ~12-1pm, we will break for lunch (lunch buffet for ticket holders); then resume General session until around 2pm. Breakout sessions (4-5 speakers) will occur after that; followed by a social hour and Cash Bar & 50/50 ticket sales. Evening events include the Banquet meal (ticket required); Keynote speaker and Live Auction. The evening concludes with payment & pickup of all live and silent auction items. Credit cards will be accepted.

SUNDAY-Cowboy church; President's breakfast meeting & Breakfast buffet (ticket required); General Session begins; Photo Contest & Cross Cut Saw winners announced; 2025 Convention information; elections for national directors; close of general session; Vendor & club display take-down; Post-Convention state director meeting concludes the convention.

Photo Contest

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(s) Friday afternoon or Saturday morning before 9:00 AM
- Photo contest will have 6 categories. Members are limited to 2 entries in each category.
- Photos are to be taken by amateur photographers only and must be BCH member's.
- 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
- You may enter by mail (see below).

Categories with Descriptions:

1. **Winter Wonders:** any photos depicting winter, animals, trails, landscapes etc.
2. **Stock & Wildlife:** horse, mules, dogs, cats, etc.
3. **Legendary Landscapes:** Montana scenery, mountains, lakes, etc.
4. **Kids Old & Young:** People of all ages
5. **Back Country Horsemen at Work:** work projects, trail clearing
6. **Laugh Out Loud:** Makes you smile

Photos may be mailed if needed to: Heather Hamilton, 109 S. Hauser St.
Anaconda, MT 59711

***Photo Contest document at:** <https://bchmt.org> for details & label page under upcoming events”



BREAKOUT SESSIONS &/OR CONVENTION PRESENTERS

Shannon Witt, DVM at Clark Fork Vet Clinic in Deer Lodge, MT

Presentation topic: Equine Chiropractic Care

Dr. Witt grew up raising cattle on a farm in Kingston, Washington. She fell in love with Montana while attending Carroll College. Shannon then graduated from Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2011.

Shannon is proud to call the Deer Lodge Valley home and to raise her children, dogs, horses, and cattle here.



Amber Wagoner-Toynes, Wagoner Training LLC; Melrose, MT

Presentation topic: Mule Training

Amber started riding at age 8, giving lessons at 15, training horses at 15 (for Free), Paid Trainer at age 21. She is the owner of Wagoner Training – Starting colts and Mules, Giving Lessons, Hosting Clinics, and Breeding & Training her own horses at Melrose,

MT. Go to her website and check her out: <https://www.wagonertraining.com>



Megan Kelly, DVM, University of Montana Western, Assistant Professor

Presentation topic: Back country colic or lameness are topics requested

Dr. Megan Kelly is a practicing equine veterinarian and owner of Browne's Bridge Veterinary Service in Glen, Montana. Dr. Kelly is a 2010 graduate of Washington State University. She enjoys the recreational opportunities within the region, particularly backcountry riding, fishing, and hunting. As a Montana native, she is happy for the opportunity to live and practice in her home state. In addition to practicing, Dr. Kelly is also passionate about equine education. She is an Associate Professor for the Equine Studies Department at the University of Montana-Western.



Raffle Ticket Prizes!!

Drawing to be held March 9, 2024

Need not be present to win

*Must pass background check for Rifle

Ruger 7mm PRC Rifle



Set of "Rawhide Gear" bags for your saddle



36" Blackstone
Griddle Starter Set



\$250 Visa
Gift Card

16" Dewalt 60V
Flexvolt Max Electric
Chainsaw + 3 batteries



Tickets 1 for \$5 or 5 for \$20

Presented by the Mile High Back Country Horsemen

Decker Dispatch

Back Country Horsemen of Montana State Chapters

Beartooth BCH
PO Box 614, Absorakee, MT 59001

Bitter Root BCH
PO Box 1083, Hamilton, MT 59840

Cabinet BCH
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

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



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