



EAST SLOPE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN

FOUNDED 1978 37 YEARS OF TRAIL TAILS October 2015

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Joe Suta

Secretary:

Helen Suta

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LeAnn Hermance

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Bill Poser

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Steve Hutton

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[www.bchmt.org/esbch/
default.html](http://www.bchmt.org/esbch/default.html)

Montana BCH Web Site

www.bchmt.org

Greetings to All,

Once again I am amazed at how fast the summer has gone. It's almost time for Ron and Debbie to come home after their successful sightseeing/hunting/fishing trip to Alaska. For those who are following their travels on Facebook, it certainly has been an eventful trip. Zane can attest to it.

September has been an eventful time for the back country in Montana too. With over 50,000 acres burned in the Family Peak complex alone the back country as we remember it is forever changed. Granted we can now see more since the trees are gone. In the newsletter are two stories from Steve Hutton and Lisa Schmidt on what damage they observed. Thank you for sending them. Also for the past couple of years the club has been trying to do a weed spraying project at Lange Creek. The Sheep Mountain fire did get to Black Reef ridge but I don't think it got to the weed area. Darn. Last night's fire call reported that they did not have the anticipated moisture but are downsizing the fire crews possibly by the end of the month. On Monday the 5th they will start looking at what trails to open around Gibson.

Currently we are waiting to hear from the vendors we requested raffle items from. Hopefully by the meeting on Thursday the 8th, we will have an answer. Bob and I are also putting together an excel spreadsheet for the list of vendors and donations for the auction. Support from the club members has been great and we are starting to receive vendor confirmations. I am thinking we will need a meeting in November just to make sure nothing is falling through the cracks. Also we did receive a packet with the information on last year's convention from the Selway Pintler club. Lots of timely information and a thank you to Kathy Hundley for sending it.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, October 8th at 7:00 pm. Again we will have the meeting at our home at 26 Pendroy Rd. first house on the right. Bob and I look forward to seeing you.

Le Ann

MEETING REMINDER—THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8TH, 7 PM
BOB AND LEANN HERMANCE HOME— 26 PENDROY RD.



October Birthdays

Debbie Ries
Abby Hutton
Bill Poser

East Slope Back Country Horsemen
Regular Meeting/Bob and LeAnn Hermance Home
September 10, 2015

President Bob Hermance called the regular meeting to order at the Hermance home on September 10, 2015 at 7:10 P.M. There were 7 members in attendance: Joe and Helen Suta, Merlyn and Linda Huso, Bob Hermance, Keith Alltucker and Sue McNeal.

Minutes

Bob asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the last meeting as published. There were none and the minutes were approved as published.

Treasurer's Report

Bob read the Treasurer's report in LeAnn's absence. There were no bills presented. Keith made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report, seconded by Merlyn. Treasurer's report approved.

Bob said there was also a Time CD due to renew soon and wanted to know how the members wanted it handled. A motion to renew was made by Helen, seconded by Merlyn. Motion approved.

Committee Reports

Merlyn wanted to let the members to know that he had filled out an application in the name of Ken Ausk to the Montana Outdoor Legacy Hall of Fame. He would be presenting it at the upcoming State BCH meeting to be held soon.

Merlyn also gave a report on the packing clinic that had been held at the Boone and Crockett Ranch. This was a packing clinic put together by Kathy Hundley of the Bitterroot club for the benefit of young people. There were sixteen young people in attendance to learn about packing and packing equipment, safety and light on the land, etc.

Correspondence

Bob had the Bitterroot Newsletter for the members to read. He also read a report concerning the amount of volunteer hours and dollar amounts for the Montana BCH for 2014.

No Old Business or New Business

Convention Progress Report

Bob reported that we now had a 501c3 status, and that

Fred had submitted applications for grants to North-western Energy and Stockman Bank.

We looked over the raffle poster draft Fred made. We still need another raffle item. Bob said that now that we have 501c3 status, he will contact John of North 40 about their donation to the convention. We may use that donation as a raffle item.

Things are starting to come together, but we need to have everything lined out soon. Bob said we would probably need to start having convention committee meetings more often to make sure we are up to date with progress. We discussed breakout sessions, entertainment and finding enough people to help with the convention as a work still in process.

The next regular meeting will be October 8, 2015 at Bob and LeAnn Hermance's at 7P.M. Merlyn made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Keith. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Suta, Secretary



Ron and Z
man's
Moose hunting
In Alaska.



Hello,

We just couldn't help ourselves. We had to go see the results of fire in our backyard. Fortunately, we picked a gorgeous day and rode through part of the forest that did not burn, too.

Lisa

Prairie Ponderings - Fighting Fires

By Lisa Schmidt

My husband, Steve, and I both have a little timber management background so we rode into the nearby mountains to take a look at the results of the Family Peak Complex fires.

Silence.

No birds. No squirrels.

Even the horses' hooves made no sound in the ash.

The sky had returned from an eerie smoke-filled orange to clear blue, but dust rose to our saddles.

Grit permeated our gloves and socks.

"What is that white cross on the ground?" I asked.

"Those are former trees," Steve answered.

Images of Hiroshima after the atomic bomb flew through my brain.

Plenty of sunshine splashed shadows across our path where, before, we had ridden through pine and spruce black forest.

I counted standing burnt trees and stumps. About one out of 10 trees still stood vertical. The rest looked like the ash in our wood stove.

Grass was beginning to peak from the soil in three low spots. During the rest of our 5-mile ride, the ground was completely bare.

"I hope this place gets gentle showers and snow until the grass can grow," I muttered.

"The ground sure needs some cover, but I doubt it will get it soon enough," Steve replied as he looked up the steep barren sides of the canyon.

The creeks we crossed were clear, but pockets of black charcoal pooled in the backwaters.

On that sunny day, the earth was slowly healing itself, but repairs balance precariously on the teeter-totter of terrain and weather.

If everything held together – moderate temperatures encouraged seeds to germinate and moisture came gently – Badger Creek would look a lot like Observation Pass in a few years. Fireweed would sprout first to protect the soil. New lodgepole pines would push through the brush to find the sunshine. The Backcountry Horsemen would clear the trail of newly-fallen, charred, dead trees every summer.

Fire is Nature's management tool.

Fire encourages diverse vegetation that benefits soil, plants, animals and humans.

But.

But a fire that burns as hot as the Family Peak Complex creates a tiny balance point of healing on that teeter-totter of changing conditions. A single raging thunderstorm could wash away most of the soil and all hope of recovery during the foreseeable future.

Logging is a human management tool.

Logging that black forest before fire hit would have created an insurance policy of a cooler burn.

That cooler burn would not eliminate all of the vegetation that protects the soil.

That teeter-totter would have a far-broader balance point. The earth still would protect itself if the weather and terrain brought wind and water erosion.

Selective logging also encourages diverse vegetation that benefits soil, plants, animals and humans.

While wildfire provides a surge to our local economy, logging offers sustained economic stability. Instead of one or two paychecks written by taxpayers to wildfire fighters, private paychecks create added wealth for years. It is time to invest in an insurance policy for our national forests that will pay environmental and economic dividends.

As almost everyone is aware, our local playground behind Swift Dam has been ravaged by fires. Lisa and I rode over Tubby Creek, Blind Creek, and back down the North Fork of Birch just after the fires subsided. On Blind Creek amid the former huge black timber groves many x's were on the landscape where the trees burned so completely that only orange white ash remained. The south side of North Fork of Birch where we normally go up on our poker ride is completely burned out. The Haywood Creek area is completely burned. Good news: The Hungry Man creek culvert is still intact and functional even though we installed a plastic culvert. The culvert and rock project from ten years ago is still in good shape near Blind Creek also.

On Sept. 14, we packed across the Divide. South Fork Trail 105 has 4 culverts that need to be replaced plus two "bridges" over boggy areas that are either collapsed or boards broken. The outfitters and other trail users are detouring around those.

We encountered a very nice but admittedly green outfit camped west of the divide. Their 7 horses were tangled in highlines that were too low, etc. They were there on the recommendation of Bob Marshall Wilderness writer, Roland Cheek. These riders used Flathead and ESBCH websites for information, so our information is referenced and used!

After completing our four day sojourn, I noticed severe trail sloughing off near the top of Swift Dam's South Side trail. Abby and I went back on Saturday, Sept. 19, and pick-axed the trail wider. We stacked rocks along the outside edge so it is much more stable.

I heard about the airlift for the injured packer who was drug from the North Side of Swift Dam all the way back to the trailhead. Here's hoping he survives. That accident reminds us to be careful at all times.

Steve



Safety Tips for Hunters visiting the National Forests

- Check weather reports before visiting the forest.
- Tell someone where you will be hunting and when you will return.
- Be familiar with the area you want to hunt.
- Dress properly and be prepared for the worst possible conditions.
- During certain seasons, hunters must wear hunter orange viewable from all directions.
- If accompanied by a dog, the dog should also wear hunter orange or a very visible color on a vest, leash, coat or bandana.
- Check hunting equipment before and after each outing, and maintain it properly. Familiarize yourself with its operation before using it in the field.
- Carry a spare set of dry clothing. Use layering techniques to prevent moisture while retaining body warmth. Always bring rain gear.
- Carry a first aid kit.
- Clearly identify your target before shooting. Prevent unfortunate accidents or fatalities.
- Put hunting plans in writing (dates, times, location and expected time of return). The Coast Guard recommends putting boating plans in writing; leaving one at home and one on your vehicle.
- Be alert when hunting near developed areas and trails. Other recreationists are in the forest as well.
- Avoid wearing white or tan during deer season. Wear hunter orange or another highly visible color.

These safety items you would think are common sense. A week ago a hunter was shot by another bow hunter after dusk. The bow hunter said he just saw four legs thinking it was an elk but turned out to be two people walking down the trail. Individual was shot in the leg and mercy flighted out. Please be proactive in your own safety. Don't assume the person heading towards you is smart enough to know you are a person. Also don't forget your bear spray as a hunter was mauled in the Blackleaf this weekend.

Sheep Mtn. Fire

Friday, October 02, 2015 1:00 pm

With cooler temperatures and precipitation predicted for the weekend updates will be discontinued until Monday, 10/5 unless significant activity occurs.

Contact: Rocky Mountain Ranger District, (406) 466-5341 or Augusta Information Station (406) 562-3247. Email – familypeakcomplex@gmail.com

Media Contact: Dave Cunningham, (406) 791-7754

Size and location: Estimated 2400 acres west of K-L Guest Ranch at the head of Gibson Reservoir and south of Gibson Reservoir near Black Reef.

Weather: Today should see seasonally moist and cool conditions. A cold front will pass through the area Friday night bringing stronger north winds with gusts to 25 mph after midnight. Rain is expected throughout the day Saturday with rainfall amounts of .4-.8" possible. Rain will likely change to snow Saturday night with possible accumulations of 1-3" above 4000'. Winds Saturday are predicted to be around 10-25 mph with gusts to 35 mph at the ridgetops. Long range forecasts in this area call for little moisture and average to above average temperatures through the month of October. ***Although fire activity should slow over the weekend with the predicted weather, hunters and other recreationists should be prepared for renewed activity once conditions begin warming and drying again throughout the coming weeks.***

Activity: With cooler weather and precipitation predicted for the weekend part of the Lewis & Clark Hotshot crew will hike out from the K Bar L Ranch today. A crew of 11 will remain at the head of Gibson Reservoir re-enforcing line and mopping-up further into the interior of the fire. Three helicopters are assigned to the fire through today with two assigned through the weekend. Bucket work will continue if needed north and east of Sun Butte. The Helena Hotshots continue working in the area and are available to assist. The fire has been burning in a mosaic pattern with both burned and unburned areas within the fire perimeter.

A Type III Incident management team (Marc Hamlen – IC, Fred Thompson – IC Trainee) remain charge of the fire.

Additional Information: Pre-evacuation notices remain in effect in Sun River Canyon area for approximately 80 residences, recreational cabin properties and resorts. Pre-evacuation is a warning for residents to be prepared to evacuate quickly depending on how the fire continues to develop. **The Home Gulch and Mortimer Gulch campgrounds have been re-opened. All trail closures will remain in effect and are continuously being evaluated to balance access needs while providing for public and firefighter safety.**

Note: the lower portion of Moose Creek Trail #131 has been closed due to current fire activity on the Moose Ridge Fire. Please contact the Ranger District at the numbers listed above for up to date information on current fire activity.

Sheep Mtn. Trail Closures:

- 201 – South Fk Sun - from Mortimer trailhead to junction with Trail 231 Circle Cr.
- 202 – South Fk Sun – from jct. w/trail#203 north.
- 208 – Arsenic Creek in its entirety.
- 221 – Glenn Creek in its entirety.
- 222 – Bear Creek in its entirety.
- 241 – Windfall Creek in its entirety.
- 243 – Lange Cr.– closed from jct. w/trail 256 north.
- 249 – Goat Creek in its entirety.
- 250 – S. Fk. Glenn Creek in its entirety.
- 251 – Big George closed to jct. w/trail 259 Mortimer Pass.
- 261, 261.1 – Moose-Furman & Sun-Butte Cutacross in entirety.
- 262 – Prairie Creek in its entirety.
- 265 – S. Fk. Sun Low Water closed in its entirety.
- 268 – Elk Hill closed in its entirety.
- 272 – N. Fk. Sun Cutacross – closed in its entirety.

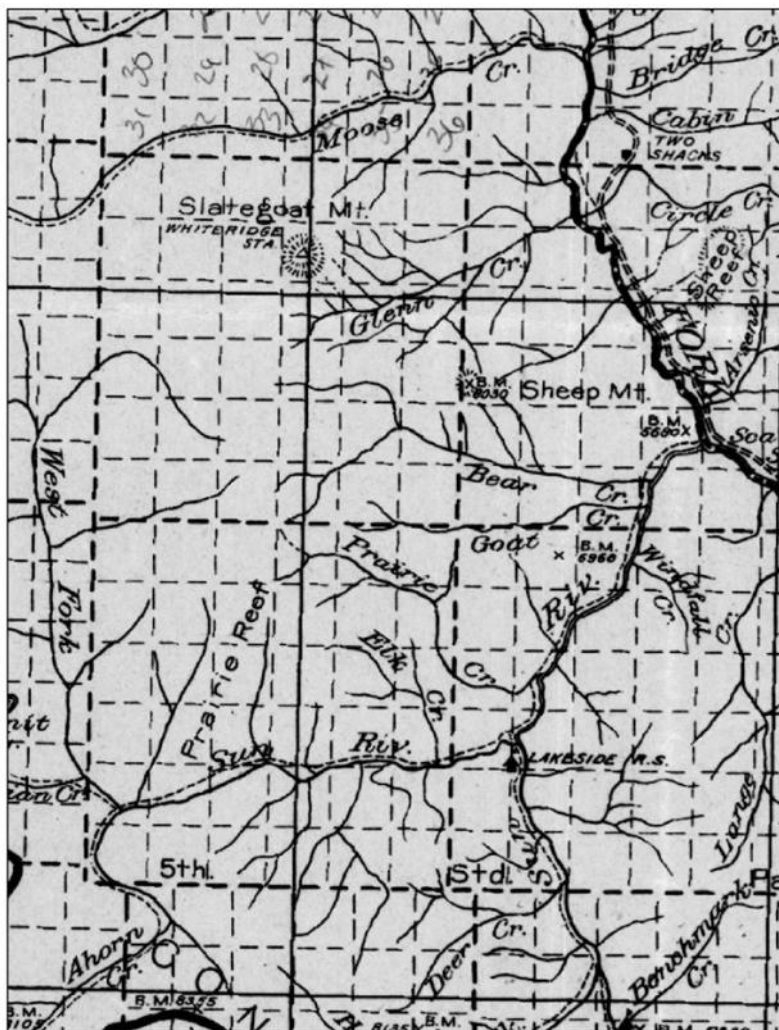


(On the right) Two pictures of fire lookouts from The Northwest Fire Lookout Page on Facebook.

A very interesting old map portion from the Lewis and Clark National Forest, along with an interesting tidbit about an old Ranger Station named Lakeside.

1927 map titled "Lewis and Clark National Forest Montana Teton Ranger District". Original scale 1:250,000.

This map is more than a bit puzzling. Remember, when looking at this map, that Gibson Dam was not completed, and so the reservoir wasn't there yet. The wagon road up the North Fork is visible in the north-west corner of the map, and the cabin at Two Shacks is on the map. The trails showing are just mainline ones, and lookouts on Prairie Reef and Moose Ridge are absent from the map. What puzzled me for years, however, was Lakeside Ranger Station. It shows on this map as being on the South Fork Sun just upstream of its confluence with the West Fork. As far as we know, this station was never built, and instead Pretty Prairie was, downstream of the confluence, several years later. One possibility for this showing on this 1927 map was that Gibson Dam was still under construction and the station was just planned. Some years after I first saw this map, I ran across something about the original planned height of the dam being significantly higher than when it was actually constructed. The inundation area behind the dam would have been vast, and included most of the area up to and south of the West/South Fork confluence, meaning that "Lakeside" would have been a logical name for a planned ranger station that today is nowhere near a lake! Plans for the ranger station probably changed when the reservoir ended up being smaller, and Pretty Prairie, with its great grazing was a far better location.



I hypothesized that the Lakeside Ranger Station, on the West or South Fork Sun River, as seen on the 1927 map below might never have existed. Today, I eat my words, having found a photograph of the station, just this morning, by K.D. Swan, and clearly showing a cabin with the distinctive cliffs above and west of the confluence of the West and South Forks in the background!

History is often a gradual searching through breadcrumbs of evidence to uncover the gold, and it's always such a great feeling to clear up a years-long mystery, even if you do prove yourself wrong in finding the answer. I do stick by my theory that the name "Lakeside" was chosen when the Gibson Dam was planned to inundate an area much larger and farther upstream than it does today, eventually making this cabin actually a lakeside one. But until something more is found, that remains merely a guess! (from the Lewis and Clark Nat'l Forest Facebook page.)

Photo: Lakeside Ranger Station by K.D. Swan (FS Photographer), Map: 1927 Teton Ranger District Map