

BCHA Public Lands Committee call

January 11, 2018

On the Call:

Jacque Alexander, AR; Randy Brown, GA; Chuck Miller, MT; Bob Magee, CA; Sherry Copeland, MO (and BCHA Treasurer); Alan Hill (and BCHA Executive Committee member), CA; Nancy Sluys, VA; Diane Cherry, VA; Jan Koval, NV; Peter Urban, WA; Russ Wright, AZ; Debbie Spickermann, NM; Jim Allen, SD (and PLC co-chair); Barry Reiswig, WY (and PLC co-chair); Darrell Wallace, WA (and BCHA Vice Chairman); Freddy Dunn, UT (and BCHA Chairman); moderated by Randy Rasmussen, BCHA Director, Public Lands & Recreation

Purpose of the Call: Begin to coordinate broad strategy on key BCHA public land issues.

1. Actions Related to HR 1349, bikes in Wilderness bill)

- HR 1349 passed the House Committee on Natural Resources and will go forward for a potential Floor vote (date unknown). Likely to be packaged with other bills or must-pass legislation.
- We had a good letter-to-the-editor printed in DC's "The Hill" the day of the bill hearing: <http://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/363779-americas-wilderness-is-no-place-for-motorized-mountain-bikes>
- We must fight bill in the House, would hate to see it pass and move the fight to the Senate.
- Good article and recent editorial in the LA Times:
<http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-mountain-bike-trail-republicans-20171219-story.html>
<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-mountain-bikes-wilderness-20180103-story.html>
- USFS Retirees organization on board, reaching out to veterans' organizations as bill proponents say Wilderness Act prohibits wheelchairs and other mobility devices (not true, Americans with Disabilities Act makes clear these are allowed in Wilderness).
- Remember: the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) does not support the bill: <https://www.imba.com/news/imba-advocates-collaborative-approach-HR1349>
- **BCHA will circulate another action alert in about 2 weeks urging all members to phone their representative.**

Chuck: govtrack.us shows bill history; indicates a 28% chance of this bill becoming law.

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr1349> A: They use algorithms to guess at this.

Diane: Who are our allies? A: The Wilderness Society; Partnership for the National Trail System (PNTS), which includes Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA); American Hiking Society (AHS) and the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance (NWSA). There is a 100+ member coalition headed by Wilderness Watch, but we did not want our unique voice to be lost in the crowd.

Freddy: Foundations supportive? A: Yes, many. PEW Charitable Trusts, Storer, many more. The bill is a direct attack on the 1964 Wilderness Act by trying to amend the Act (which has never been done before).

Jim: went yesterday to NF Advisory Bd and spoke to agency leaders. Some in the dark regarding HR 1349's progress. **We as individuals need to reach outside our organization and encourage allies to contact their member of Congress.**

Randy: **Op-eds in newspapers needed; please contact me. Please call your representative on HR 1349.**

Freddy: **Please ensure your local forest district offices are on your chapter's mailing list.**

Jacque: How do we get list of who is already receiving BCHA's quarterly newsletter? A: Erica has that list.

Debbie: How do we get digital copy of newsletter for distribution: A: It's on BCHA website. **Please also "share" our Facebook posts on such topics with your contacts.**

2. Actions Related to Federal Land Transfer

- No active bills in Congress to facilitate fed land transfer, other than one that would transfer management authority for oil, gas and minerals from the feds to the states (S.335, Federal Land Freedom Act, which is partisan with only 8 cosponsors).
- No response from DOI regarding the joint petition we submitted with TWS, et al, to request a rulemaking process that outlines the departments lack of authority to facilitate public land transfer.

Randy: Will speak about this issuing during February's Hike the Hill. Ideas on how we keep this issue fresh in our members' minds?

Jim: **Will circulate Peterson's Hunting magazine article on how the new administration is facilitating behind-the-scenes public land transfer.**

3. Ideas for Agenda, Public Lands Workshop (April National Board Meeting)

Freddy: Focus should be ways BCHA can continue to grow; thinking of splitting up NBM audience into regions during PL Workshop for regional discussions that help to inform broader BCHA strategy.

Alan: Senior agency people have limitations on what they can say to us. So regional discussions sound good for agenda, as issues across BCH states are different; the key is we need solution-oriented discussions at the end.

Chuck: Agree. Senator Daines S. 2206, Protect Public use of Public Lands Act, would remove ("hard-release") 600,000 acres of Wilderness Study Area (WSA) protections in Montana. Randy: Wyoming is bracing for similar state-specific bill for hard-release of USFS and BLM WSAs; Barry at meeting tonight in WY with allies to map out their plan.

Randy: Barry proposed PL Workshop include about 2 hours where attendees: a) split into regional groups, b) asked to define what is your greatest (1 or 2) trail or public land issue, and c) asked to define how to address the issue. Groups would reconvene for discussion with all attendees to look for commonalities and troubleshoot solutions.

Jan: Important to group the states into regions that have common public lands issues. Nevada is primarily a BLM state.

Chuck: NBM dates? A: April 23-25, with Public Lands Workshop on April 24th.

4. U.S. Forest Service Blasting Policy

BCH Idaho (Rod Parks) brought this issue to BCHA's attention. He and BCH Montana (Brad Pollman) are following USFS Region 1 dialogue on whether the agency will out-source its (dynamite) blasting program to a private contractor. Turns out this is a question being explored by USFS national office. Horsemen have great concern that we'd lose professionally-trained USFS certified blasters, as they are efficient and quick into the field to aid road and trail construction/maintenance and fire suppression activities (hazard tree mitigation, fire line construction). There could be long wait times for contractor to bid on work and travel to the work site. **Randy will inquire about this issue when Hike the Hill participants meet next month with USFS Chief.**

5. Importance of Forest Management and "Health" Bills?

In lieu of the issues discussed above, plus reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and campaigns to safeguard trail funding for the USFS, Randy ask the committee to weigh in on the relative importance to BCHA's mission of current forest management and forest "health" bills and how much time we might devote to that. There are many active bill in Congress.

Debbie: Probably best to address at a regional level. Wildfire funding (i.e., Wildfire Disaster Funding Act), however, is a national issue. Huge drought in New Mexico, and would the forests even be open for public use after March? So very important in southwest for funding: Randy: agree that wildfire funding should remain a high priority, more so than any forest "health" bill.

Diane: Forest health bills not as important as other issues, don't want to overwhelm our members with issues and alerts on so many topics.

Alan: Agree 100% that other issues should remain priority. Rep. Westermann bill (HR 2933) may be pieced out into small parts.

Jacque: We need to continue to bring awareness of forest health issues, including those that affect Wilderness or other BCHA interests. Like Westermann's bill proposed to do to BLM Wilderness in Oregon. But don't call out the troops on forest health since there are other pressing issues.

Conclusion: The consensus among PL committee members was a preference to monitor key forest health bills, but not engage directly unless other BCHA interests might be affected.

Next Meeting

Randy will circulate in 2 weeks a doodle poll for scheduling the next PL Committee call. Objective of the call will be to flesh-out action plan on HR 1349 and Public Lands Transfer campaigns.

Phone Conference lasted 63 minutes.

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