OUR PURPOSES
- To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America’s back country and wilderness.
- To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
- To assist various agencies responsible for the maintenance and management of public lands.
- To educate, encourage, and solicit active participation in the wise and sustained use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public, commensurate with our heritage.
- To foster and encourage formation of new Back Country Horsemen organizations.

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Understanding Terminology for Public Lands
Submitted by: Mack Long, Mission Valley BCH, BCH Montana, Education Chairman BCH of America

There has been a lot of attention recently about Public Lands and where America is headed with the management of those lands. Further, anyone who recreates on Americas public lands is often exposed to unfamiliar terms and may not understand the differences. Following is a brief description to give you a working understanding of the differences and what that means to you.

First, what are “Public Lands”? These are the lands that are owned “equally” by all Americans. There are 618 million acres of public land across the U.S., with a significant portion in Alaska and the western U.S. The total U.S. land base is 2.27 billion acres in size. These federal public lands are managed in trust for us, (citizens of the U.S.) by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Park Service and the Wildlife Refuge System for current and future generations.

“Front country” is not a commonly used term, but is generally any public lands that are relatively accessible by means such as motor vehicles, boats, bicycles, hiking, horseback and aircraft and are usually within a short distance of roads. Generally, these lands provide a multitude of recreational activities. Camping may be in developed or dispersed/undeveloped areas. Logging, grazing and mining are often permitted on these lands as well. These are often highly used areas where it is common to see other people and activities.

“Backcountry” is generally the area beyond what is Front country. Pretty vague, but accurate. There is no specific line or map designation where this starts or ends. Access is more challenging and is usually by a trail or cross-country travel and at a further distance from roads and trailheads. Access may be allowed by the same list as above, but with greater responsibility on the user as trails receive less maintenance. In addition, the safety and welfare of each recreationist to care for themselves is increased. Camping is usually in dispersed sites. You would expect to see fewer people and activities than in the Front country.

“Roadless Areas” had their beginnings when Primitive Areas were established in the 1920’s. The idea was to preserve some lands in a roadless condition at a time when automobiles and road building was rapidly expanding. As time progressed, Roadless Areas have been challenged legally and politically as to which lands should remain or be opened. Currently, there is about 58 million acres of unroaded forests. There are about 380,000 miles of roads on Forest Service lands. In comparison, the Interstate Highway system has about 47,000 miles of road.

Unlike Front country and Backcountry, “Wilderness” is defined and receives that highest level of land protection. While some may get a “wilderness experience” in the Front country or Backcountry or a Park, true Wilderness is a specific geographic area and can only be established or “Designated” by an act of Congress. The Wilderness Act of 1964 put into law what is required to be a “Designated Wilderness”. It [continued on page 10]
National Director’s Column

By Mark Himmel
National Director, BCH Montana

50th Anniversary National Trail System

2018 is the 50th anniversary of the National Trail System Act. The trails included in the Act consist of the Historic trails, Scenic trails and National Recreational trails.

National Scenic Trails are trails at least 100 miles in length that provide for outdoor recreation of scenic, historic, and natural qualities in the areas they pass through. There are 11 Scenic trails in the trail system. To get a description of each follow: https://www.trails50.org/national-scenic-trails

National Historic Trails are also extended trails although they may be less than 100 miles. These trails consist of historic trails or routes from our history. Trails also include historic waterway based routes. There are 19 Historic trails in the trail system. To get a description of each: https://www.trails50.org/national-historic-trails. National Scenic and Historic Trails can only be designated by an Act of Congress.

National Recreation Trails provide outdoor experience primarily in and around more urban areas. There is no minimum length requirement for these trails. These trails may be designated by either the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture. There are over 1,200 trails in all 50 states in the trail system. To find one near you follow: https://www.trails50.org/find-an-event/ and click on NRT data base.

The Partnership for the National Trail System is a collaboration of outdoor groups formed to increase awareness of the National Trail System among all Americans. Their objectives are:

• Increase awareness of trails and the National Trails System among all Americans
• Inspire younger generations through new media to become trail users and supporters
• Connect Americans to trails – physically and emotionally
• Increase engagement with trail activities, stewardship, and protection

The Partners and Affiliates (BCHA is an affiliate) formed a committee, The Trails 50 Coalition, to advance the objectives listed above. I sit in on the Trails 50 Coalition meetings as the BCHA representative. Our monthly calls consist of planning for events in 2018. The Committee has assembled a media kit https://www.trails50.org/toolkit/ for individual organizations to use to further advance their event. There is also a photo contest starting in January of 2018 through August of events or scenery for the Anniversary. (More info on photo contest to follow).

So how does all this affect you and me? I figured that a trail project would be easier to organize so I checked out the possibilities. Ok, CD Trail obvious, but I wanted to do an event on June 2nd - National Trails Day. Winter is still around so what else? I checked the NRT trail system map and discovered a trail that we have been working on for the past 5 years is a listed NRT trail. (I seem to be the last to know this.). I clicked onto the https://www.trails50.org/find-an-event/ and then clicked on “Add your event to this map.” I filled out the form and placed a marker on our location. (Deep Creek Trail in the Little Belt Mtn.) It took about 15 minutes to complete. I have the media kit downloaded and will start running Facebook ads closer to the event.

If there are any questions let me know and I’ll do my best to get your event listed.

Mark Himmel 406-781-8252
Hello, Everybody!

It’s shaping up to be a busy season this spring and summer. Mark and Smoke have gotten the ball rolling on the Regional Pack Trip and if we can get the schedules in sync we will be sitting around a campfire with the Chief of the Forest Service, the Region 1 Forester, and the Forest Supervisor of the forest we’ll be riding in. We have also invited the Governor of Montana. This will build relationships that will help BCH Montana to be as strong in our vision as we can be. So if and when you get a call from Mark and his committee, please help any way you can so we can make this as big of a success as the past regional pack trips have been. It’s going to be a lot of work but I believe the payoffs will be priceless.

As you well know we are facing a challenge like we have never seen on our public lands and wild places. We will need to stand together with our partner organizations and work with these land managers to keep the privileges we have on these lands and have them protected for the future generations. Stand tall, stand together, and be proud to be a Back Country Horseman.

I’d like to encourage everyone to get out there and support the Judith Basin chapter by selling those raffle tickets. Hope to see you at convention in April!

Happy Trails,

Brad Pollman
Chairman
BCH Montana

STATE BOARD VOTES TO OPPOSE HR 1349, BIKES IN WILDERNESS BILL! At the December 2, 2017 State Board meeting in Missoula, the Board voted unanimously to oppose the Bill currently in Congress that would amend the Wilderness Act of 1964 and allow bicycles in the Wilderness. At the time of the Board meeting, a critical vote by the House of Representative subcommittee was just days away. Despite an outpouring of letters and phone calls from BCH members to Congressman Gianforte, in the days leading up to the vote, the Congressman voted twice to support the Bill. The Bill now goes to the full House Floor to be voted on in the near future. California Congressman McClintock is the committee chair and introduce the Bill that Gianforte supports. McClintock allowed only testimony that supported the Bill and did not allow anyone who opposed it to express an opinion. While BCH is clearly not against bicycles using the majority of our Public Lands, some places should be kept in their natural condition for future generations to enjoy. On January 12, 2017, Congressman Gianforte announced that with the additional information that he has received, he is reversing his position on HR 1349 and will vote against it if it makes it to the House Floor! He agrees that Wilderness should be managed to perpetuate not only the landscape, but for the traditional and historic methods of travel being horseback, hiking and floating.

BILL TO RELEASE WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS INTRODUCED INTO SENATE:

On December 7, 2017, Senator Daines introduced S 2206 titled: Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act. The Bill proposes to eliminate five Wilderness Study Areas of about 500,000 acres in Montana. We agree that it has been too long (1977) since the WSA’s were set aside to be considered as Wilderness or released. In fact, it should have been done within 5 years which is what the language stated. Between the political scene and not being a high enough priority within the Forest Service, nothing has happened. But rather than have five areas listed to be released in a Senate Bill, there should be a proactive public comment and review process, so an honest evaluation can be done to determine the fate of these landscapes. The Bill states that County Commissions, sportsmen, farmers, ranchers and outdoor recreation groups support the release. After local BCH members attended the Granite County Commission meeting, the County Commissioners took action to oppose the release. I have talked with leading sportsmen groups around the state and while willing to talk about release, they want a public process at the local level. As for outdoor recreation groups, well, at our Board meeting there was strong opposition for a blanket release of these areas. Again, do an open discussion at the local level to evaluate the values and then make a decision. The WSA’s to be released are: West Pioneers, Blue Joint, Sapphire, Middle Fork Judith and the Big Snowies.

Legislative Report for BCH Montana

By Mack Long
National Director, BCH Montana

National Director’s Column

Brad Pollman
Chairman
BCH Montana
An Introduction to the Art of Horse and Mule Packing
By Robin Morris and Carolyn Eucker, Beartooth Back Country Horsemen

Over forty years ago four dedicated hunters and back country enthusiasts sat around a campfire in Montana’s Bob Marshall Wilderness and discussed what they believed could be the loss of the pristine back country. The wilderness was being abused and neglected by stock users, among others. Wilderness camps and corrals were set up then abandoned, trash was everywhere, and evidence of horse wear was prevalent. These horsemen recognized that the unfettered and unregulated use of the back country by stock users could ultimately lead to loss of access.

Those with the wilderness foresight, Roland Cheek, Dennis Swift, Ken Ausk, and Dulane Fulton, wanted the perpetuation of stock use on public lands. But in order to ensure such use they believed that wilderness users had to influence land use planning. From the embers of the 1970’s campfire was born the framework for the ultimate creation of the national organization Back Country Horsemen of America with organizations across the United States and affiliated units in British Columbia and Alberta, Canada. All Back Country Horsemen chapters and members are dedicated to the continued use of stock on all public lands.

The mission to use and enjoy stock in the wilderness and back country requires a commitment to assist various agencies in the maintenance and management of public assets. Back Country Horsemen volunteer their time, vehicles and trailers and, most importantly, stock for projects in the wilderness. Integral to these efforts is the proper care of the most important work partner, a beloved mule or horse.

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen hosted a free packing clinic in Absarokee, Montana on April 1 and 2. The clinic was led by Bob Hoverson, a veteran packer who retired from the Forest Service after 42 years. Hoverson is the author of The Packers Field Manual. He annually rode over 1,000 miles and packed over 100,000 pounds of equipment, supplies and materials into remote back country areas. He is a Master Instructor of Packing and Leave No Trace Camping with stock.

Day 1 was spent in the classroom learning the basics from how to choose the right animals, what equipment is needed, how to use it, how to take care of it, etc. Bob believes in taking the time to select the right animals, based on disposition, size, and conformation. He prefers mules over horses for packing as they have a stronger sense of survival and a stronger herd instinct. He also talked about herd dynamics. Mules will “bond” very quickly with a horse they have been kept with for any length of time, which comes in handy as you can secure your horse and turn your mules loose to graze, as the mules will generally stick around. If given the choice, he prefers all geldings (for packing and riding) as you will have fewer problems associated with biting, kicking and inattention to the job if you do not have mares in your string.

Bob embraces a style of packing called the Decker method for a number of reasons: it allows one to carry odd shaped loads, which is common while conducting trail maintenance and/or delivering supplies to remote work crews, the saddle can be adjusted to fit the conformation of the horse or mule as the tree can be shaved down to better fit the animals back, and it allows the load to sway with the movement of the animal or if it hits a tree it will swing back and then resume its position. Traditional Decker style packing consists of two loads of similar weight and bulk wrapped in a piece of canvas called a “mantie”. These cargoed or mantied loads are tied with rope to each side of the saddle with a “basket hitch”. The two loads are positioned to form an “A” over the back and down each side of the pack mule. In most packing situations, the loads should be able to swing freely at the bottom. The ability of each side pack to swing freely is the major difference between Decker style and sawbuck style packing. This allows the mule to breathe easier and allows some leeway, should the mule bump into something solid. Bob also talked about the importance of balancing your loads to keep the saddle centered on the animal’s back. Balancing involves not only the weight, but where that weight is carried. For example, dividing your cargo into thirds vertically, you would want the most weight in the middle third on each side and similar weights in the top and bottom thirds, for both sides as well. Again, this will allow for the desired “swing freely” motion. While Bob focused on the Decker method, much of the information presented applies to any packing technique.

Breaks throughout the day were used to learn and practice how to: properly secure an animal using a quick release knot, the basket hitch, and the barrel hitch. At the end of Day 1, we were divided into teams of 3-4 to learn and practice cargoing using hay bales and metal trunks. Cargoing involves securely wrapping two bundles in canvas (mantie) that can be slung from each side of the Decker saddle. Bob uses a standardized method to ensure the cargo is tightly wrapped and that the payload is protected from the elements, such as dust, rain, snow and the mules themselves. Imagine a poorly wrapped load of hay bales. It has happened – you get to your destination to discover that the mule has already “dined” on much of his cargo.

While many of us struggled initially, with Bob’s help we were all, eventually, able to pass the “cargoing” inspection.

When we arrived on Day 2, there were multiple pack horses and mules already in place for us to practice firsthand the next step, loading and securing our cargo. This was truly the highlight of the clinic. It was exciting to teams of two working together to safely move around and secure their loads, many of which were very heavy, on the patient livestock we had been provided. The barrel hitch took quite a bit of concentration as you are balancing your load – mostly on your chest – while you are maneuvering your sling rope to secure your load. Bob went into greater detail for the more seasoned packers and took the time to demonstrate how to properly saddle and adjust the pack saddle rigging to hold the saddle in the correct position and to keep it from causing a sore or hair loss. We had over 60 folks in attendance that ranged from seasoned packers, to those wanting to volunteer on work projects, to those that simply
If you would like to join us, please contact a chapter in your area. More information is available on our website:

www.bchmt.org

Schedule for chapters’ news article submissions
E-mail to: deborah.bcha@gmail.com

Spring Issue
Articles due May 5th, 2018: Charlie Russell, East Slope, Flathead, Gallatin, and Judith Basin

Fall Issue
Articles due September 5th, 2018: Last Chance, Mission Valley, Missoula, Northwest Montana, Selway-Pintler Wilderness

Winter Issue
Articles due January 5th, 2019: Beartooth, Bitter Root, Cabinet, Three Rivers, Upper Clark Fork, Wild Horse Plains, and convention hosting chapter

I want to camp in the Wilderness using their own animals. I believe we all came away with a new understanding and appreciation for what our animals can do for us, when we set them up for success. Bob’s book, *The Packer’s Field Manual*, is a wonderful resource with lots of informative pictures that will better prepare anyone with an interest in packing, or assisting those that do pack.
Two Years in the Making
By Taylor Orr, Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen

Years ago, I’m told, the Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen (BRBCH) cleared Gold Creek Trail on the Bitterroot National Forest to “3-Mile Meadow” every Father’s Day weekend under the masterful leadership of Gene Burroker. For some reason, that tradition faded until 2016 when it was added back to the docket, including the entire Gold Creek loop trail system, making it a 14 mile project.

Years and years of fallen timber offered a lot of chainsaw practice as several work trips gradually inched up the drainage and over the ridge in 2016. After removing hundreds of trees we came close to connecting the loop last fall but couldn’t quite get it done.

This year, we had a golden crew of eight trail dogs ranging in age from 9 to 69 years. The roster included, Duane Krowen, Ed and Christy Duggan with son, John, Dan and Becky Brandborg, Katie Phillips, and Taylor Orr. Like last year, we split into two crews and hoped to rendezvous mid-point in the loop; and we were not denied, meeting shortly after lunch below Balsam Springs. And how sweet it was to finally meet our goal two years in the making!

Young John, at nine years of age, was on his first pack trip under the careful tutelage of his watchful parents. John went on to have his 2017 summer filled with pack trips helping his parents with trail and pack support projects. He shows great promise and represents one of the, unfortunately rare, next generation of packers.

For such a small drainage, Gold Creek has a lot history, some verifiable, some hearsay. Evidence of mining activity abounds with prospecting pits, a rock lined sluiceway, mine shafts, and an old cabin site, all still visible. And then there are the stories of the Chinese mining camp and the lost satchel of gold nuggets to further whet the appetite.

Gold Creek is part of the Stony Mountain Roadless Area consisting of over 103,000 acres on the Bitterroot and Lolo National Forests. The area has over 70 miles of sorely neglected system trails, but BRBCH is working with the Bitterroot National Forest and other partners to address the backlog.

If you would like to inspect our work, search for gold, or let’s not forget, spot Bigfoot, wait a bit for the trail conditions to dry out. A heavy rainstorm last June was hard on Gold Creek Trail. The trail has always been primitive and rocky with a few bogs sprinkled along the way, especially the first three miles, but things should improve by mid-summer next year.

And remember to pack a saw, and a gold pan!
Cabinet and NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen clear 32 miles of trail and drain the Olson Creek horse-eating bog at our Annual Oscar Miller Work Project - June, 2017
By Deena Shotzberger – President, Cabinet Back Country Horsemen

Armed with chainsaws, shovels, Pulaskis, peeves and brush nippers, 22 members of the Cabinet and NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen teamed up with two Forest Service employees to clear 32 miles of trail and excavate a ton of mud, logs and debris to drain a horse-eating bog on the Olson Creek Trail. The normally silent trails in the Silver Butte and West Fisher drainages were alive with buzzing chainsaws, sharp cracking as trees separated, soft thuds of horse’s hooves and the somewhat common creak of an aging joint as individuals and stock pushed to their limits to provide the public with access to this beautiful area.

On the Kootenai National Forest, trails need to be maintained annually to provide safe and unobstructed access in this heavily forested landscape. Despite the heavy snow last winter, the majority of the trails had about average downfall this year. This was a welcome condition compared to the record amount of down trees our members cleared during this project in 2016. Back Country Horsemen cleared down and leaning trees, cut encroaching brush along the trails, opened drainage structures and re-cut trail base in areas where the previous base had disappeared. Most of the work is back breaking labor and requires miles of hiking to maintain trails in these remote areas. Despite popular belief, “you can’t clear trail from the back of a horse!” However, we do use stock to help carry our tools and personal gear, and sometimes for the ride out at the end of a long day, making the job a little easier on our aging workforce.

So why do these hardy souls, most in their 60’s and 70’s, volunteer their time to perform the arduous work of clearing trails? With continual budget cuts, the Forest Service can no longer maintain all the trail systems on the Kootenai, and they definitely can’t do major projects like re-treading trail sections and draining the horse-eating bog on the Olson Creek Trail. Back Country Horsemen step up because we are passionate about keeping trails open for all users. By clearing trails we provide the opportunity not only to horsemen, but also for hikers and hunters to experience all that this amazing corner of Northwest Montana has to offer. The personal benefit is the satisfaction of a job well done and that unobstructed, relaxing fun ride at the end of a long weekend of clearing!

For the Oscar Miller work project our members clear trails adjacent to the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness by day and come back to the Oscar Miller Dispersed Site on the West Fisher in the evening. After a hard day’s work, we enjoyed grilled steak, Dutch oven cooked casseroles and desserts, and numerous potluck dishes. The evenings were spent by a crackling fire, with an unobstructed star lit sky and the company of great folks who are brought together by our passion to maintaining trail access for horsemen and hikers—now and for generations to come.

If you are interested in seeing some beautiful country and helping with our annual Oscar Miller work project next June, contact Deena Shotzberger at dshotzberger@hotmail.com for information.
Bitterroot clan, honored for backcountry pack mule work, has some stories to tell
Reprinted with permission by EVE BYRON, Ravalli Republic
eve.byron@ravallirepublic.com
Dec 11, 2017

Oh, the stories the Schram/Duggan clan can tell about pack mules, the backcountry and Mother Nature.

Seated around the kitchen table, Julie Schram, her daughter Christy Schram-Duggan and husband Ed Duggan fire off anecdotes about years of packing so quickly it’s tough to keep them straight. One involves packing in four boxes of dynamite, detonation cords and blasting caps, making sure that the explosives were on different mules.

“Pete had the biggest load — we put 220 pounds on him because the rock drill weighed 110 pounds and we needed to keep it even,” Schram recalls. “We ended up going 22 miles and the last mile and a half they had snowdrifts up to their bellies. What happened was, there was a landslide and we couldn’t go down where the trail went, so we had to go down to this deep, steep spot with drifts still there. This was around the Fourth of July!”

With the easy banter of family, they finish each other’s sentences while sipping coffee and tea.

“We packed a 6-foot ladder in one time,” Duggan said.

“That was awkward,” Schram-Duggan adds, laughing.

“And then there was the 8-by-10-foot roll of canvas that we couldn’t fold up,” Duggan said. “We took the pack boxes, loaded them up and put the roll on the pack box. It stuck out past the mule’s head and past her tail. We packed it on Lady — she looked at us like ‘Really?’”

They’ve packed mules since they were in their teens, and all are members of the Bitter Root Back Country Horsemen, which works with the U.S. Forest Service to help maintain trails. They’re also volunteers with the Montana Wilderness Association, packing in tools — and lots of food — for crews as they take care of those places where mechanized equipment isn’t allowed.

“MWA is a fun group, and have people come in from all over the country to work on the trails,” Duggan said.

“Remember the guy from New York last year?” Schram-Duggan adds. “And the guy from Texas who was a vegan? He was hard to wrap your head around. He’s from Texas and doesn’t eat meat?”

All three agree that the trail crews do amazing work, so they were surprised last week when they were honored by the MWA with the 2017 Continental Divide Trail Crew Volunteer award. Sonny Mazzullo, the MWA stewardship coordinator, noted that Schram and her late husband Dave have been helping out since 2008, and after Dave died in 2016, Schram, Schram-Duggan and Duggan picked up the slack.

“They’re damn good people,” Mazzullo said. “Much of the Forest Service and BLM’s highest priority trail work is deep in the backcountry. Without the support of Backcountry Horsemen like the Schram-Duggan family, MWA would be unable to get crews into these areas to work.”

The award also included Schram-Duggan’s two sons, John Renner, 10, and Beau Duggan, 12.

“The award caught us totally off guard,” Schram-Duggan said. “When he said our name, he had to coax us to go up there for the award. I was like, ‘Crap, we have to stand up.’”

They modestly counter that without the trail crews and their fellow High Country Horsemen groups, many hikers and horseback riders wouldn’t be able to get into backcountry.

“They do amazing work. Sometimes we ride in on a rough trail, and come in the next week to pack them out and you can’t tell it’s the same trail,” Schram-Duggan said.

Last summer, they packed in four out of the five Continental Divide trail projects; the fifth began at the trailhead. They take in bear-proof metal food boxes, most of the crews’ personal gear, tools and beverages. If the trail is 8 miles or less, they’ll drop off the items, stick around for lunch, then head home. If it’s one of the longer trips — like 22 miles — they stay overnight.

“Packing is a skill and an art rolled together,” Duggan notes.

When the trail crews are finished, the family makes the return trip to pack them out.

“And we always have cold beer for them when they come out,” Duggan said.


They typically pack in with anywhere from six to nine mules and a handful of horses. In their pasture on a cold winter morning, where Schram-Duggan is the sixth generation, the livestock nuzzle them for scratches or watch warily.

Duggan says the mules all have distinct personalities. Lady is an old Forest Service mule and a “diva” who hates getting loaded but who is one of the best on the trail. Joe gets offended if he’s not carrying the tool box, and will hit every tree on his way down the trail until he gets it. And don’t put Pete and Joe together on the string.

“One will go one way around a tree and the other goes the other way,” Duggan said. “With mules, especially these characters, they’ll do things just because it’s quiet or boring.”

And after listening to their stories and laughter, it’s clear that the Schram-Duggan clan takes after their mules more than they’d like to admit.
On a sunny Saturday, May 6, 2017, the Mile High BCH held a Defensive Horsemanship clinic for its members, members of the Dillon BCH, and several other guests interested in BCH. The clinic was hosted by Dean and Wendy Briggs at their Jefferson County Equine facility in Whitehall, Montana.

Dean Briggs (trainer, roper, cow cutter) started the day off by addressing and demonstrating equipment (tack, trailers, and clothing), equine behavior and potential risks, and horse handling (catching, loading, saddling, mounting).

The group then shared good conversation and a delicious lunch prepared by Wendy Briggs (training assistant and amazing cook)!

After lunch, participants rode inside the arena and practiced hands-on equestrian skills with Dean and other members of MHBCH providing one-on-one instruction.

The group was able to take advantage of the Briggs’ outdoor obstacle course that consisted of log obstacles, terrain obstacles, bridges, waterways, gate, and confined spaces.

A member of the Life Flight Network gave a presentation about First Aid and the availability of using their emergency services in the backcountry.

This training event was successful in providing Defensive Horsemanship to members of both the Mile High and Three River BCH and is an example of what the chapters hope to be future joint events and projects in our area.

Rich and Jacque Duxbury organized the clinic on behalf of the MHBCH.

Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation Packer Apprentice Program

Packing and stock use has a rich heritage in The Bob and has helped to shape the character of the Wilderness Complex and its users. The backcountry stewardship work done by the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation would not be possible without pack support from horse and mule strings carrying gear, food, and tools up to 30 miles each way from trailheads to their project locations.

However, packing is a fading skill. As members of the packing community retire, there are fewer and fewer young packers coming up to take their place. Ensuring that packing knowledge and skills are passed on to future generations of wilderness packers is critical to preserving Montana heritage and enabling wilderness stewardship to continue for years to come.

With this goal, the BMWF with the support the Backcountry Horsemen have established a packer apprentice program. This program will provide a unique opportunity for aspiring packers to train with some of the most respected packers in Montana in order to pursue future careers packing with outfitters or government agencies. Apply today! Review of applications will begin March 15 and Apprentices will be chosen mid-April. Visit [www.bmwf.org/packerapprentice](http://www.bmwf.org/packerapprentice) to learn more.
states how it will be managed and what modes of access or travel are acceptable. The Act requires that it be managed to protect its natural condition, where it is untrammeled by man. It is to maintain its primeval character, shaped by the forces of nature with man’s work substantially unnoticeable. The purposes will be to provide solitude, and escape from mechanized use and maintain historic uses.

Three more terms that you may hear. “Recommended Wilderness” is generally lands identified on Forest Plans or agency plans that recommend specific areas for Wilderness Designation by Congress. “Proposed Wilderness” is generally lands that have been submitted to Congress for Wilderness consideration, a step closer than recommended. However, these two terms can mean the same thing depending on the agency. Finally, “Wilderness Study Areas” or WSAs’s are areas that are inventoried and undergoing the Wilderness review process. They are lands that should be managed to preserve the character or special attributes that made them a WSA.

**Parks** generally have defined geographic areas which are indicated on maps. The recreational uses within a Park are often highly regulated due to a significant amount of visitor use. There are 58 National Parks, and most are associated with a specific national treasure. Interestingly, some iconic National Parks like Yellowstone, Grand Teton and Glacier and others are NOT designated Wilderness. They are “recommended wilderness” but to date, Congress has not given them the additional level of protection.

Parks can be managed by a city, state, private or federal entity. The simplest definition comes from Wikipedia: A “Park” is an area of natural, semi-natural or planted space set aside for human enjoyment and recreation or for the protection of wildlife or natural habitats. It may consist of grassy areas, rocks, soil and trees, but may also contain buildings and other artifacts such as monuments, fountains or playground structures.

The vast majority of our public lands are managed under the multi-use designation that includes both the Front country and Backcountry. This allows for a multitude of activities to be offered on the majority of our Public Lands. Only about 3% of the lower 48 states land base is designated Wilderness.
2018 Back Country Horseman of Montana State Convention, April 6-7-8, 2018
Hosted by Judith Basin Chapter, Lewistown, MT
Submitted by: Karen Kuhlmann, Convention Co-Chair
kbkuhlmann@midrivers.com, 406-538-4575

2018 STATE CONVENTION, “LAYING TRACKS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION”

If experiencing Lewistown’s famous Charlie Russell Chew Choo dinner train is on your bucket list, and you’re a member of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana, you’re in luck. Organizers of the 2018 State Back Country Horsemen Convention from Judith Basin Chapter in Lewistown have chartered the Charlie Russell Chew Choo and are including the train and a five-course, white linen, prime rib dinner in convention registration. A total of 250 guests will ride the train and have the time of their lives on Saturday, April 7th, 2018.

The Charlie Russell Chew Choo dinner train won the Food Network’s “Craziest Fine Dining Experience of the Year” in 2015. Train passengers will enjoy a fabulous dinner, tunnels, trestles, wildlife viewing, historic narration, ‘live’ music and even a train robbery by the infamous Salt Creek Gang mounted on horseback. An unforgettable encounter is promised!

Planners of the state convention from Judith Basin Chapter want to give Back Country Horsemen delegates from across Montana an authentic taste of Central Montana. In addition to a memorable excursion on the Charlie Russell Chew Choo dinner train, registrants will eat fried fruit pies baked by the Troyer family of Big Sky Amish Market at Eddie’s Corner, Dutch oven cooking by locals with proceeds going to youth Camp Maiden, and a pancake breakfast tossed up by Sky Amish Market at Eddie’s Corner, depending on the time needed to stop out to browse and shop.

Opening ceremonies at the Trade Center on Saturday morning will feature Presentation of the Colors by Boy Scouts of Lewistown, and an invocation by Sr. Pastor Curt Langendorff of Celebration Community Fellowship Church. The Saturday evening auction will be conducted by Shobe Auction. A number of local artists and artisans will share their western wares at the Trade Center all day Saturday and Sunday morning. The public is invited to stop out to browse and shop.

Depending on the time needed to transact business, amend the State Constitution and manage resolutions, a number of program presentations will be on held: ‘Ghost Towns & Gold Mines,’ table-top ‘Panning for Yogo Sapphires,’ and Noxious Weed Education (an ever vigilant concern).

Judith Basin Chapter of Back Country Horsemen across Montana. Each chapter can send eight voting delegates. Many delegates bring family along for the fun. State Directors and officers meet prior to and after the convention to handle state officer nominations and address other administrative issues. Most attendees will stay overnight in Lewistown both Friday and Saturday nights, April 6 and 7, 2018. Overnight accommodations and RV information can be found at EnjoyLewistown.com and at bchmt.org/judith.

Each chapter is asked to bring a Live Auction item valued at $100+ for the Saturday night auction benefiting the State organization. Raffle tickets from Judith Basin have been distributed to all chapters offering prizes of a beautiful hall tree (delivered FREE anywhere in Montana), choice of a rifle, a pair of Yogo sapphire/elk teeth earrings and a custom-made fire pit featuring trail riding and packing scenes. Photo contest information is available on-line at bchmt.org/judith. Back by popular demand is the cross-cut sawing competition.

The mission of the Back Country Horsemen is to practice and preserve the good sense use of Montana’s spectacular back country for equestrian use. Founded in Montana, now Back Country Horsemen chapters are found across the U.S. from California to the East Coast.

For inquiries about the convention or the Lewistown Judith Basin Chapter, please contact Billie Ayers, President, billie.ayers@icloud.com, 406-535-8822 or Sharon Gottardi, sharongottardi@hotmail.com, 406-538-2688, or Karen Kuhlmann kbkuhlmann@midrivers.com, 406-538-4575. Judith Basin Chapter, P.O. Box 93 Lewistown MT 59457.
We know from the annual volunteer hour reports that our organization does an amazing amount of work. I wanted to share with you what an outsider sees based on submissions within this particular scope of work. Below is a copy of the final report submitted to FWP to close out our 2015 RTP grant.

Thank you to all who performed the work itself and to those who diligently kept the records and worked with the RTP committee to complete this funding opportunity.

As an overview, the state organization, the Back Country Horsemen of Montana, submitted an RTP request in 2015 in which 9 of its 17 statewide chapters participated. The purpose of the grant was to perform trail maintenance and pack support on multiple trails within their chapter area. The RTP application was submitted for $90,000; the amount granted was $40,000.

Even with the number of wildfires encountered each season, we were able to complete the grant within its standard time frame with no request for extension. As mentioned in the last draw request, all 9 chapters that asked to participate under the umbrella of the state chapter participated. It has been an eye-opener as overall breakdowns and costs normally absorbed by our volunteer members have been tallied together -- and this accounts for only 9 of our 17 statewide chapters and just a portion of the trailwork that has been performed.

One of our initial goals of the RTP grant was to encourage new volunteers to participate, including those who perhaps had not done so due to out-of-pocket costs. The feedback from our chapters has been good and it sounds like discussion has already started to consider applying for another grant at the state level.

The Back Country Horsemen are appreciative of this grant funding and would like to thank you for supporting our efforts, which keeps trails open for multiple user types, including stock.

Below is a breakdown of our RTP accomplishments, as well as a list of the 64 trails that were worked on, some of them multiple times either due to annual clearings (as the chapter had ‘adopted’ that trail and accepted responsibility for cleaning) or often-times due to continual blowdown due to previous fires in the area.

I would like to make special mention that meal reimbursement was very much appreciated. Not all work projects used funds in this way, and I personally know many meals were either covered by individuals or by the chapters themselves. It does a lot for endurance and the psyche to provide meals when burning so many calories performing trail work.

- 85 works projects
- 64 trails (listed below)
- 90 miles of trails, which includes 53 miles in wilderness areas
- 296 volunteers
- 1,046 meals
- 730 stock days
- 338 stock hauling days
- 32,492 vehicle miles
- 7,239 in-kind hours, valued at $137,125

Trails on which maintenance was performed:

2314 Road/Trail
4th of July
Baggs Creek
Berray
Bledgett
Blue Mountain
Boulder Creek
Boyd Mountain
Brush Divide
Buffalo Horn
Burnt Cabin
Burnt Fork
Calf Creek
Castle Rock
Cedar
Cottonwood
Coyote Coulee
Crazy Creek
Cutaway Pass
Divide Trail South
East Fork
Eastside Trails
Elk Creek
Elk Park
Elkhorn Creek
Fales Flat
Flat Rock
Gates Clearing
Gates of Mountains
Gold Creek
Great Burns Study Area
Hahn Pass
Hellroaring
Iron Meadows
John Long
Lake Creek
Larry Creek
Lodge Pole
Main Stillwater
Monture Trail
N. Fork Blackfoot
N. Fork Hell Roaring
Nez Perce
Norman
Olson Creek
Oscar Miller
Ousel Falls
Porcupine Ridge
River Trail
Ross Creek
S. Cottonwood
S. Fork Bear Creek
S. Fork Lost Horse
Sheldon
Shields River
Slough Creek
Spanish Creek
Spruce Lake
Tamphery
Trapper Creek
Tri-pod
Upper Ford
Upper Ford
Upper Yaak
Watchtower
The Environmental Protection Agency sponsors a program called the National Aquatic Resource Survey (NARS). This collaborative program between the EPA, states, and tribes is designed to assess the quality of the nation’s coastal waters, lakes and reservoirs, rivers and streams, and wetlands. NARS provides critical scientific long-term data on the nation’s waters.

In the summer of 2017 research scientists were in Montana testing lake water. One of the lakes was high up in the back country of the Anaconda - Pintler Wilderness. Mystic Lake sits at nearly 8,000 feet in elevation and is less than a half mile from the CDT. It is a third of a mile long but only a tenth of a mile wide and around 50 feet deep. There is an historic USFS ranger cabin there and excellent horse camping is found only a short distance away to the west.

The two scientists, who were from the Great Lakes Environmental Center, and under contract by EPA, needed to be packed in to do their work but no available outfitter could be found. Recreation Forester John Ericson from the Wise River-Wisdom District called on us for help. Callie Boyle and I decided it would be a fun challenge and their work was certainly in line with conservation of wild country.

After a phone visit with research scientist Jim Stricko, it was estimated that all their necessary equipment was around 160 pounds and we felt this was doable with one pack horse. Their equipment included a “small” boat, laboratory equipment, ice to keep samples cool, and other miscellaneous items.

A week later at our trail head meeting we discovered that “small boat” does not mean the same in Michigan as it does in Montana. The other equipment included some long PVC pipes, a 10 pound anchor, sensitive lab equipment that had to remain in its protective box, boat pump, oars, nets, and more. A fun challenge it was. The anchor was left behind in favor of using a rock, the lab equipment was bagged up with some soft items and loaded with a basket hitch. All the long items were wrapped up in a six foot duffel bag and loaded on ‘Thor’, the Norwegian Fjord pack animal, using a barrel hitch. The six foot wide rolled up boat had to be the top pack and was carefully balanced and secured with an Arizona box hitch.

This was not the prettiest packing job but we had no choice. Thor’s load was closer to 180 lbs, the ice went into cantle packs on the two saddle horses, and Jim and fellow scientist Kyle walked in with their remaining equipment in backpacks. Thor is short but extremely solid and steady. His light draft horse breeding from western Norway serves him well in Montana’s back country.

The five mile ride in went well with only one adjustment. Young Kyle was thrilled at the bear sighting and the weather was good that morning. Once at Mystic, Callie and I went to work inflating the boat and finding an anchor rock, while the scientists prepared their sampling bottles, calibrated their equipment, and donned their water outfits.

Five hours later they were almost done when the sky began to darken. Thunder could be heard off in the distance toward Wisdom. When lightning began striking within a half mile Jim called it a day - a disappointment to Kyle who was anxious to do his aquatic insect netting along the shore. Safety prevailed.

It was a typical high-country storm, fast and furious, but we had no extra time to wait it out. The water samples had to be Fed-Exed that evening to the labs in Michigan. Saddling and repacking was at hand in spite of close lightning, loud claps of thunder, and periods of intense rain, during which we took some shelter under the ranger cabin porch.

The rain finally let up and the ride out was mostly uneventful. With the horses and tack loaded for the long drive home, we said farewell to our new friends, and ended the day feeling good about another team effort to help Montana’s greatest resource, its wild back country.

**Membership Report**

By Sherri Lionberger, BCHMT Treasurer

Membership numbers have remained strong through the past decade. 2017 showed only a slight decrease in numbers.

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Family memberships have been counted as two, regardless of the number of family members, so these totals are likely much lower than actual numbers.

In the future, BCHMT would like to track our membership numbers more closely, especially noting the number of youth members.

We will be talking about a new membership accounting system at the next state board meeting. These numbers are valuable not only for our own record keeping, but for grant applications, donations, and political clout.
A year ago I became president of Mission Valley BCH. As president of a club and a member of an organization that is set on preserving our backcountry, the high-country, the wilderness—whatever you want to call it and being able to work with other like minded organizations and people—it is humbling.

So what does Mission Valley BCH do? We like to work and we love to play! We are a club that has a membership of diversified backgrounds. That is a convenience as it allows us to fabricate most anything we need to get the job done.

State Convention 2017

A major event that was not the “norm” was hosting the 2017 State Convention. This is the 4th time MVBCH has hosted a state convention. There is a lot of work that goes into hosting a convention. The key is a strong Committee Chair person who can “Ramrod” from start to finish, Connie Plaissay was that person! The convention came together and what took months to prepare for was over in about two days, with a sigh of relief mind you!

2017 Forest Service Certifications

Defensive Horsemanship is the minimum requirement for any work we do with the Forest Service. February we held our Defensive Horsemanship course at Charley Hahns Barn on Eli Ga Rd. Our instructors included Mack Long and Carl Schauss.

First Aid/CPR was taught by Connie Long and Don Lathom (Life Flight) at the Hall Residence. This is good for two years and again is well attended.

Saw recertification was taught by Cody Kuepen up at Patrick Creek. Because we were all current on our certifications all we had to do was drop a tree safely. This involved the Forest Service Instructor choosing the tree and discussing with the group what to look for, potential hazards and the safest way to bring the ‘Hummer” down.

Mission Valley BCH Pack Clinics

We held a series of three Pack Clinics in 2017. Pack Clinic #1 is a class room setting with no stock. We discuss the various pieces of equipment necessary, learned to manly a load, various knots that can be successfully used, and in general the safest possible way to pack. Pack Clinic #2 was taught by Carl Schauss and Louis Polinsky. This involved getting to know your equipment, how to put it on a horse/mule. Pack Clinic #3 was taking them out on the trail.

THE ANNUAL STEAK RIDE!!!

We also put on the Annual Steak ride the first weekend in May. This is our Annual “Fund Raiser” in which we sold out on all 150 tickets. We usually map out the trail the weekend before the ride, mark it the Saturday of the ride and ride on Sunday! We ride Rain or shine and it was a good ride with a fantastic steak following the Ride!

THE 31ST CSKT RIVER HONORING

Following right behind the steak ride is the River Honoring. CSKT hosts the 31st Annual River Honoring in which our club teaches Leave No Trace (LNT). Each year the Mission Valley BCH members present the Principles of Leave No Trace to the group. It is a favorite of the kids and teachers alike with about 1000 4th & 5th graders participating. One reason for sure is the lighthearted way that Scott Kiser and Connie Plaissay present these very important guidelines to keeping our lands natural and clean.

2017 Trail Cleaning

For several years we have been clearing, cleaning and repairing three different trails, all of which are located in the Saint Regis area. All three of these trails are under the jurisdiction and management of the U.S. Forest Service, for which we provide our services as contractors. The three trails are all very different as to location, scenery, altitude, river and creek sources. It would be pretty difficult to find other terrain in Western Montana that is as scenic as these three trails, which include the River Trail, Flat Rock Creek Trail and Boyd Mountain Trail.

So What else do we do—We have fun rides! In June we hold our Fathers Day ride at the Jette Tailhead North of Polson.

Rodeo Parking for the Pioneer Days Rodeo Event. That is always a hot but fun event. This event was the first weekend of August starting Friday and running through Sunday. We had a strong turn out for this event and a lot of fun doing it!

Two times a year MVBCH members meet near mile marker 12 on Highway 15 (Blue Bay) and pick up litter for 2 miles.

The last event of the year is the Christmas party. Here we seem to outdo ourselves on the food and the highlight of the evening is the Chinese Gift Exchange.

We are involved in any issue that involves public lands. We have been following the Swan Lake Initiative, attended the Public Lands Rally in Helena last January, participating in the opposition of HR 1349, a bill to amend the Wilderness Act and allow bicycles into the wilderness, and S 2206, a bill proposing to release FIVE wilderness study areas.

This is Mission Valley BCH, a club devoted to our Mission Statement and our friends!

Happy Trails from all of us! (MVBCH members)
In 2017, Montana Wilderness Association’s Stewardship Program expanded the scope of its boots on the ground efforts in order to better serve landscapes beyond the Continental Divide Trail. MWA’s Volunteer Trail Crew has taken the place of the CDT Montana program and will continue the tradition of engaging volunteers in trail maintenance and construction projects across the state. The program will still maintain the Continental Divide Trail while also focusing on other trails in MWA priority landscapes ranging from the Kootenai to the Proryors. Heading up the Volunteer Trail Crew is MWA Stewardship Director, Matt Bowser, and MWA Stewardship Coordinator, Sonny Mazzullo - who have a combined total of 25 years of leadership and experience on trails.

Along with maintaining trails, another goal of the MWA Stewardship Program in the future is to steadily branch out into other areas of resource management on our National Forests. Citizen Science initiatives, such as Wilderness solitude monitoring and wildlife surveying, will hopefully become an added component of MWA’s Stewardship Program. Engaging volunteers in these efforts helps us provide another service to underfunded land management agencies and supplies data that is critical for maintaining Wilderness characters and designating new Wilderness.

This past summer as the volunteer trails program underwent transitions, the MWA Volunteer Trail Crew still managed to mobilize 58 volunteers who contributed over 2,200 hours of service to Montana’s trails.

These crews:
• Improved 26 miles of trail
• Removed over 240 blowdowns
• Maintained nearly 200 drains
• Brushed 6.5 miles of the CDT
• Compiled 228 days of service on the trail

The past and future successes of MWA’s stewardship efforts have been and are wholly dependent upon a passionate volunteer base. And no group has exemplified this spirit of service greater than Backcountry Horsemen. Over six seasons of MWA sponsored volunteer trail projects, BCHMT has provided over 2,000 hours in the saddle - packing MWA trail crews deep into the backcountry. Without the dedication of the BCHMT (and the compliance of their mules), MWA would not have been able to maintain the trails in most need of help.

MWA thanks BCHMT for providing a legacy of service to Montana’s trails. As MWA continues its work on the CDT and steps into new landscapes to build new trails, we will need friends old and new by our side. We look forward to protecting Montana’s wilderness heritage, quiet beauty and outdoor traditions together with BCHMT for years to come.

BMWF Volunteer Packing Opportunities for 2018 Field Season

By Jessica Evans, Outreach Coordinator

Thanks to a strong partnership with Montana chapters of the Backcountry Horsemen, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation has been able to clear trails, fight weeds, and instill a public lands ethic for more than twenty years. Will you join them this summer?

Dates for stewardship trips into the Bob will go live on their website on March 1. If you’re interested to help as a volunteer packer or crew member, visit www.bmwf.org/programs to learn more.

Thanks to donated time, talent, and money, these trips are free and open to the public so that all can experience the wilderness without cost barriers (a $75 deposit to reserve one’s spot is refundable). To learn more, please email program@bmwf.org.
Youth Summer Camps 2018
By Greg Schatz and Kathy Hundley, Youth Education Committee Co-chairs

We would like to thank all of the BCHMT members who came out this past summer to share their knowledge of back country stock use and packing to teenagers at summer camps around Montana. We reached 86 campers throughout the summer, many of them already had stock and now they are aware of how they can access the back country.

There are also a few more young people nagging their parents for horses, courtesy of BCHMT. We have the opportunity to have a BCHMT sponsored stock packing summer camp in the summer of ’18. We just received permission a couple of days ago to use the Forest Service Monture Guard Station near Ovando as our headquarters.

The day after we received permission we were able to raise $1,200 to help support the camp. Right now we are thinking the camp will be half a day Thursday, all day Friday and Saturday, and about half a day on Sunday.

We will send out more information as it becomes available. If you have any ideas on how to make the camp successful please let either Kathy Hundley or Greg Schatz know. If you have any money to throw our way we will take that too!!
Packer Stu Sorensen arrives at Swiftcurrent Lookout in Glacier National Park, July 26, 1976. (Mel Ruder photo)
Stu Sorensen is a charter member of Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead.

David and Helen Morris, also charter members of BCHF, had an outfitting business at Silvertip in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Before the dam went in at Hungry Horse, David and his brother Lester herded their horses from Whitefish up the canyon, along the South Fork of the Flathead River to the Silvertip trail. Later they got this stock truck.

Helen’s old cookstove was packed up to the hunting camp.