Greetings fellow Back Country Horsemen. During the last decade I have enjoyed immensely serving on the state board as a director, treasurer, and vice chairman. It is now a true honor to be your new Chairman of BCHM. The past and present officers and directors are certainly some of the finest individuals I’ve had the pleasure of knowing.

If you are like most of us in BCHM you just got finished doing something with your horse and the sun has been down for over an hour. The seasons pass quickly here in Montana except for winter, which was about seven months long this year in Butte. Horse people waste no time in the summer. It’s trail rides, pack trips, and work projects. Weddings and family reunions sometimes go on the calendar after the pack trip dates are firmly in place! Riding time is oh so precious.

Equally as precious as riding time, however, is the riding place. Time and place go hand in hand. In recent years I’ve tried to stray a bit from the stomping grounds of my youth, the Anaconda Pintler Wilderness and the Pioneer Mountains southwest of Butte. I’ve managed to get into the Bob, the Scapegoat, the Lee Metcalf, the Snowies, the Big and Little Belts and the Elkhorns. I’m hoping this summer to get in along the Idaho border around the Great Burn and then south of Dillon around Italian Peak.

All these quiet and beautiful places are precious to us for the same reason diamonds and gold are precious. They are becoming increasingly rare and more people seek them out with every passing year. And just as we care for and protect our precious gems we should do the same for our backcountry treasures. To take the analogy one step further, we also need to pass these ‘family jewels’ on to the many generations to come in the same polished condition.

With the rising population in Montana and the exponential increase in ATV popularity, we
find ourselves at a point where final decisions are being made about what areas will remain quiet and pristine and what will be forever lost to the endless drone and environmental damage of dirt bikes, quads, and Rhinos. Once areas are given up in forest and travel plans to these uses they will never be retrieved by quiet trail users.

It has been heartening lately to see the USFS hiring more ATV Rangers to rein in the senseless destruction and travel violations by some ATV users. On a USFS web site a sentence reads: “The protection of these lands and resources is a fundamental Forest Service responsibility.” We couldn’t agree more. Our mission statement mirrors this notion with phrases like “common sense use”, “wise and sustained use of the back country resource”, and “the maintenance and management of public lands.”

We have a proud and admirable record with regard to caring for public lands and recent accolades by the USFS Region One office are the result of the thousands of hours we have collectively donated to this purpose. We have a strong seat at the table due to our dedication and passion for the backcountry places we all love.

So whether your special place is the Rocky Mountain Front, the Scotchman Peaks, the Great Burn, the Pryors, the Pioneers, or another untrammeled gem, please continue to be active in your work projects and vocal in your support of quiet and pristine backcountry.

See you on the trail,

Charlie

Web Developer Training

By: Dan Marsh

BCHMT Web Committee Chairman

I had a number of people ask me to set up some training on how to update their chapter’s web site at the 2008 Back Country Horsemen of Montana convention hosted by Charlie Russell. There wasn’t enough time to do the training at the convention so around twenty people that were interested in working on their chapter’s web site attended a meeting on Sunday just before everyone headed home. It was decided that we would hold a training class on web development while the board meeting was in session in order to save gas money by the people hitching a ride with their directors. The board decided to hold the meeting in Helena so the Last Chance chapter was put in charge of finding a place for both groups to meet.

Darlene from the Last Chance chapter spent weeks trying to find a location that would have internet access and a projector available for the training. Darlene came through with a meeting place after a number of other locations were shot down with scheduling conflicts or lack of internet access to end up at her own workplace at the AARP conference room. There was a little apprehension on my part when we couldn’t find the projector that was supposed to be left there for our use. Fortunately Darlene had someone she knew that was going to be at the training and she was able to have her bring a projector. Darlene was a gracious host who provided everyone with coffee and pastries.

While the state directors were having their May board meeting at the Macaroni Grill in Helena, eight very enthusiastic future web developers were attending a class on creating and editing their own web sites on the Back Country Horsemen of Montana web site. These eight people represented web developers from the Gallatin Valley, Last Chance, Mission Valley, Charlie Russell, Upper Clark Fork, and Selway-Pintler Wilderness chapters.

The board had to leave by 3:00 PM at the Macaroni Grill so I told Darlene to plan on starting the training at 10:00 AM and we would go until folks got bored with me or 3:00 PM rolled around, whichever came first. I planned on covering the basics of how to edit an existing web page and provide links to free applications that could be downloaded to do the job. As it happened we not only went until after 3:00, but we forgot to break for lunch. Around 1:30, after realizing we hadn’t broke for lunch, I asked if everyone wanted to go on a break for a bite to eat or keep going and everyone decided to have another doughnut and tarry on. As I told everyone at the beginning, I am not a web developer by trade; I am a JOAT-MON (Jack Of All Trades Master Of None).

I posted the slide presentation on our web site that contains the topics we covered and links to free applications that can be downloaded to work on everything from editing images to editing HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language). You can view the PowerPoint presentation in PDF format at http://www.bchmt.org/WebTraining/WorkingontheWebSite.pdf. We covered a number of topics starting with getting an account to creating a visually appealing but quick loading web page. HTML the programming language of web pages is just a series of tags in plain text so any text editor can be used to edit a web page. The WYSIWYG or “What You See Is What You Get” type web editors make it possible to create a web page without knowing any HTML programming.

We talked a lot about how to keep the size of PDF documents and images down so the web pages load faster and people on dial-up connections have a reasonable download time. We discussed a number of free tools available to reduce the size of images before they are copied to the web site. With 6 Megapixel digital cameras in common use an image direct from the camera could be 6 Megabytes in size which would be way too large to put on a web site. We also talked about reducing the size of newsletters before they get put on the web site. Making a backup of the web pages before you do any changes was also stressed and a number of free FTP (File Transfer Protocol) applications were discussed.

The FrontPage extensions that a number of the pages use for the fancy navigation icons and photo galleries are no longer being developed by Microsoft and consequently many web hosts are dropping support for these extensions in the future. While FrontPage allowed me to create a bunch of web pages and page navigations quickly, it will take some time to remove all of these from the web site. What this means to our
Protect the value of your land and the health of your livestock.
Use Certified Forage to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

BEST DEFENSE INSIDE YOUR FENCE
CERTIFIED FORAGE
Prevent noxious weeds

For a list of producers, go to www.agr.mt.gov

“That’s the Spot” Courtesy www.joellesmith.com
Northern Region Outstanding Volunteers

By: Ginger Hamilton
Volunteer Coordinator for Region One USFS
Missoula, MT

Submitted by: Rich Fitzpatrick/Kathy Hundley

There are many outstanding volunteers in the Northern Region, but one group of volunteers that comes to mind is the Backcountry Horseman of Montana (BCHMT). These volunteers work very hard on our public lands throughout the State of Montana. Their mission is to perpetuate enjoyable common sense use of horses in the backcountry; assist government agencies in the maintenance and management of the National Forest Trails System; and educate, encourage and solicit active public participation in wise and sustaining use of horses commensurate of the Montana heritage and the backcountry resource.

The BCHMT has up to 1200 members and seventeen chapters in the State of Montana. In 2007, they volunteered over 15,100 hours of work in trail maintenance by repairing water bars, building bridges and corrals, and clearing brush and downed timber to provide safer trails in our National Forests. Other types of projects completed are restoring and repairing historic buildings in the backcountry, fish restoration projects, cleaning our public lands from trash, treating invasive weeds, hauling materials and supplies for Forest Service projects in remote locations, and just about anything a Forest Service employee would do in their regular job.

Through their volunteer efforts they help to maintain and manage federal lands. They personally traveled and hauled their stock over 94,000 miles using over 1100 stock animals to project locations. The personal costs to these volunteers are tremendous and they contribute these costs to Forest Service Districts and our National Forests. In 2007 they provided up to $222,000 estimated value of mileage and personal use of pack and saddle stock.

Another area they contribute to is teaching our youth and the public about health and safety in the backcountry. Many of these chapters provide annual horse and mule packing clinics, defensive horsemanship, and horse safety classes. They also educate the public about Leave No Trace and Be Bear Aware. BCHMT provide annual clinics in CPR and First Aid and courses on chainsaw and crosscut-saw training. Often our Forest Service employees attend these courses to learn the proper handing of stock in the backcountry.

The BCHMT provide an invaluable partnership with the Forest Service. Their volunteer efforts are an example of caring for our public lands and providing leadership to our communities all over the State of Montana. In 2007, they contributed over $446,000 of estimated value of labor and equipment for the maintenance and management of our federal lands. In today’s budget crunch, the work and knowledge they provide is invaluable to our region, our agency, and our employees, and we want to thank them for their efforts. Thanks.

Response to this letter from National Board member Chuck Miller:

Dear Ginger:

You and people in the Region One Forest Service are what make a difference. This is why BCHM volunteers work so hard to make a difference too. BCHM has worked very diligently to develop a strong working relationship at a local level as well as at a regional level, in spite of occasional adversity. We have common goals and objectives that make our relationship strong.

Persistence and communication has made the cooperative and meaningful relationship that the USFS and Montana BCH have and maintain. We thank you for being such a large part of that! You are a friend of ours.

Web continued from page 2

Back Country Horsemen of Montana web site is we will have to start migrating away from using any of these extensions and going to CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) to maintain the theme across the chapters.

There was some mention at the training that chapters may be holding a contest to see who can come up with the fanciest web site. I’m looking forward to see what everyone comes up with.
LEAVE NO TRACE

On May 13 & 14 The Mission Valley Backcountry Horseman held a Leave No Trace training for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for their River Honoring on the lower Flathead River. This training is to teach fourth and fifth grade school students about the value of good clean water. Scott Kiser, Connie Plaissay & myself, as master trainer, set up a station for leave no trace. Over the next two days we talked to almost nine hundred to one thousand kids with their teachers and advisors as they visited our station. It is always fun to go camping and work with youth on teaching the ethics on the leave no trace principles. I would like to pass along the seven basic principles of Leave No Trace to all of our Back Country Horsemen members as the start camping season for 2008.

PRINCIPLES OF LEAVE NO TRACE

PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE
- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you’ll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into groups of 4-6.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of rock cairns, flagging or marking paint.

TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES.
- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet away from lakes, streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

In popular areas
- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

In pristine areas
- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY
- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND
- Preserve the past: observe, but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS
- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the back country. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

RESPECT WILDLIFE
- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times, mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature’s sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.
Meet your State Board officers and new directors

Ken Ausk—National Director

Dennis Peppenger—Charlie Russell

Diane Powers—Mile High

Left to right: Kathy Frazier, Secretary; Charlie O’Leary, Chairman; John Chepulis: Vice Chairman; Mark Himmel: Treasurer

Paul Roccoforte—Beartooth

Gary Salisbury—Missoula

Rena Johnson—Wild Horse Plains
2007 in Review for Cabinet BCH

By: Danny Lewis
Cabinet BCH

March
◆ three members attended the State Convention in Lewistown

April
◆ Cabinet BCH provided Defensive Horsemanship seminar

May
◆ hosted the West Nile Clinic at Airfield Park
◆ enjoyed a 4 day campout at the Bull River Ranger Station, built corrals and cleared trails on the Cabinet R.D.

June
◆ cleared and installed culverts on Cedar Lakes Trail on the Libby R.D.
◆ cleared Taylor Peak Wilderness Trail on Three Rivers R.D.
◆ cleared Cedar Lakes Wilderness Trail on the Libby R.D.

July
◆ packed Forest Service tools and gear to clear the Sky Lakes Trail and Wilderness Trail on the Libby R.D.

August
◆ packed in refreshments and manned check station on Great Northern Mountain for the Iron Man competition

December
◆ assisted Forest Service at Nine Mile Remount Station with livestock.

The Cabinet BCH volunteered 452 hours and cleared 25 miles of trail on the Kootenai National Forest.

Headin’ for Montana
By: Rod Nichols

Oh barkeep pour another round while I play this old piana,
but I’ll tell you son when the party’s done I’m headin’ for Montana.

I’m goin’ back to where I come no “if’s” or “but’s” or “can I”
It’s way too long since I seen home.
so I’ head’n’ for Montana

You Texas’ boys are plum all right yore ways and cowboy manners.
them Waco belles are mighty swell but I’m headin’ for Montana

I’ve ridden drag on longhorn steers my face wrapped in bandanas, and I tell you cuz,
that’s too much dust.
so I’m headin’ for Montana

Drink up boys this one’s on me and damned be Santa Anna
my vote’s with you, but this man’s through
and I’m headin’ for Montana

Now Texas is the Lone Star State
it’s hist’ry I’m a fan of,
but I’ve heard that song far too dang long,
so I’m headin’ for Montana.

Let doggies graze when I am gone on the yellow bud Lantana,
if they should ask which way I passed.
I was headin’ for Montana.
If we didn’t have spring fever before, we certainly do now after the Beartooth BCH Spring Clinic held April 12 at the Aadland arena just south of Absarokee. Everyone enjoyed the day filled with classes.

Dan Aadland started with training tips for a back country horse. Working with a 2 year old, he demonstrated how to tie up a hind foot, lead by a foot, ground drive and, most of all, how to build a trust between you and your horse. Dan’s teaching skills always send one away wanting to try some new ideas to help make our trips to the mountains safer.

Dave Schilz and Ernie Strum spoke about hobbling and picketing, skills considered some of the most important training duties for taking horses to the back country. Once again, safety of our riding and packing stock was covered, and the importance of good picketing was stressed, unless you don’t mind walking 20 miles back to the trail head!

Ernie Strum discussed and demonstrated LNT practices. By using high-lines and cleaning up after yourself before you head home, you will leave little evidence of your stay. Ernie finished the day in a later class giving LNT tips and discussing the importance of using a fire blanket.

John Simmons talked about building trust between you and your horse and reading the body language of your horse. He discussed safety on the trail and at the trailhead. While wearing his backpack as he worked with his demonstration horse, he showed how to prepare our horse for backpackers on the trail. He left us with the thought, “can we trust our horse or does our horse trust us?”

We feed, brush and pamper our horses, but what about our saddles and gear? Sally Carter showed how to care for and clean our saddles. Our equipment often is the most neglected part of our horse use. By keeping it clean and oiled, it will last for years. Checking chinches and latigos before each ride is very important. You don’t want one to break while out riding!

In the next class, everyone learned to make a lead rope by making eye splice and crown knots. Instructors Dan Aadland, Sally Carter, Robert Leaverton and Dave Schilz had everyone practice other essential basic knots.

The packing review was lead by Dave Schilz and John Chepulis. They showed how to tie up a pack, and by using the basket hitch and the packer’s knot, we could be up the trail in no time. They also covered the importance of having a balanced load and demonstrated how to balance it.

Mike Lorash impressed all of us with his demonstration with a yearling filly who had been haltered only once before. His round pen work caused the filly to come to him before he put the halter on and his ease of working with her to get her to lead was quite amazing. In forty minutes he took the filly from trying to climb out of the round pen to leading, then loading into a two-horse trailer. Mike’s soft-spoken teaching method was a real treat. No roping or hard-handed approach was used. All the while he worked, he explained what was happening and gave us a lot of information on training.

Everyone left with a head filled with ideas and ready to get out and ride. Beartooth BCH is so fortunate to have a professional horse trainer and old timers with back country experience to help us along the way.
Coalition to Protect the Rocky Mountain Front  
By: Rich Fitzpatrick

Dear BCHM Members:

At our May State Board Meeting I was asked to present some information about the coalition to protect the Front. At the board meeting it was asked if we would be willing to offer the support of the BCHM in helping the coalition who has been seeking additional funding for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services for conservation easements along the Front. This support would include writing letters to our congressional delegates by the BCHM asking for funding being provided in the fiscal 2009 federal budget. Although the funding for next years budget has been pretty much set, we need letters for future budget considerations. Funding for the proposed project would come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). These dollars come from off-shore oil lease royalties that have been set aside for public land and easement acquisition. The LWCF is not a tax-generated fund and does not include taxpayer funding. The FWS received $1.0 million to kick off the program in Fiscal Year 2006 and another $1.9 million in Fiscal Year 2007 to continue the program. Currently there are numerous landowners interested in participating in the program but FWS needs funding to take advantage of opportunities to maintain these working ranch lands along the Front.

Private lands along the Front provide a key buffer for core protected areas like the Scapegoat, Great Bear and Bob Marshall Wilderness Areas. The FWS recognizes that maintaining agricultural land use along the Front is essential to fish and wildlife conservation efforts within this magnificent landscape. There would be no fee title acquisition of land by the FWS under this project.

A major threat facing the Front is the increasing pressure to subdivide the area for residential development given the spectacular beauty of this area, which has recently been discovered. This type of development has already impacted wildlife habitat and agricultural lands in much of western Montana.

Among biologists, the Rocky Mountain Front is ranked in the top one percent of wildlife habitat in the nation and is an important landscape within the Yukon to Yellowstone Region. The Front hosts over one-third of Montana’s plant species and the best remaining plains grizzly habitat in the world. The Front’s highest biological values are found in the wetlands and stream corridors that drain the Rocky Mountains, which coincide with areas of heaviest grizzly bear and other wildlife concentrations. The area also hosts one of the most intact native prairies in the Northern Great Plains dominated by rough fescue. Many of these attributes are located on private land.

On May 14, 2008, I attended the meeting of the Coalition in Choteau; the meeting was well attended by concerned citizens from all over. The meetings primary agenda item was presented by the Rocky Mountain Ranger District and their proposal for fuel reduction plans along Benchmark road that would provide areas for protection of cabins and such if the area is ever threatened by a wildfire again. The agency also talked about the new travel plans for the front and the three areas that they would like to see be included in any new wilderness proposals for the Front. I presented the letter from the Back Country Horsemen of Montana drafted by our chairman Charlie O’Leary and myself to the coalition and told them that we would like to support their efforts in helping with the protection of the Front. I can say that the Back Country Horsemen was accepted with an enthusiastic round of applause from the coalition. We hope that this will be the beginning of a beneficial association between our two groups. Chairman O’Leary and I will begin by putting together some letters asking for funding through our congressional delegates. These letters will be made available for all chapters, so they can write and submit their own letters. We will also begin by getting cooperative links on our respective websites so that members can keep up to date with what is going on.

One statement brought up about easements was they don’t always provide for recreation, hunting access and opportunity. I ask you, do you really believe that if these lands were purchased from an outside group that those opportunities would provide you more rights than they do now, I for one think not! The acquisition of easements is not always readily accepted by some people, there is even a certain amount of concern among some coalition members, but the one thing that was stated at the recent meeting was “it is the best tool that we have available at this time”.

For more information on the coalition, please go to this website: savethefront.org.

Respectfully,
R. Fred Fitzpatrick
Issues Chairman, BCHM
These letters of invitation were sent to Mr. Baucus and Mr. Tester. Unfortunately they were unable to attend.

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**Time to Leave the Herd**

By: J.R. Strand
Missoula, MT

Back deep within the lodgepole pine he stealthily glides through, Driven by a primal urge to do what he must do. It’s fall and time to carry on a ritual long passed down, Survival of his species, it’s now he who wears the crown.

The regal bull collects his cows, with grunts and antler prods, Instinctively he builds his herd, but time has changed the odds. His age is now apparent, for young bulls no longer flee, But challenge his stern warnings --- they disrespect authority.

It is a story oft repeated in the chronicles of life From elk and deer to buffalo, truth slices like a knife. One climbs the trail of dominance to rule with just a word, Then time puts forth the edict... “This bull must leave the herd” Reflecting on my own life, things I’ve learned and things I’ve done, Years traveling up that same old trail, shining moments in the sun. But now the mirror of reason has been wiped of all its fog, Reality reveals no pup, but one tired used old dog.

To dreams that stayed just as they were, dreams only, not full-filled, Hopes and plans abandoned along the side trails on that hill. And I’ve now heard that edict, time has issued forth that word, “you still have days of life ahead, but it’s time you leave the herd”
Bitterroot Chapter cooks for the Chamber
Submitted by: Kelly Andersson

APRIL LUNCH ~ Cooking For The Chamber

On Wednesday, April 16, about a dozen Backcountry Horsemen members braved the icy winds of spring to fix a Dutch oven lunch for the Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber members gathered at the Northwestern Energy building on Highway 93 south of Hamilton for a day of leadership seminars.

While the Chamber folks learned about leadership inside, the leading BCH cooks (along with assorted slaves and coaches) rustled up a lunch buffet out on the lawn.

Fred remembered most of what he needed for his big pot of chili – except for a few ingredients such as meat and onions – but was able to make a quick run back to the house, where he’d left the groceries in a cooler on the porch.

Earl Philips had to make a run, too, to fetch a member whose car wouldn’t start. Sue Pearson had a multi-tiered STACK of Dutch ovens going – with enough cornbread and ribs and beans to feed a small army.

Several members brought along salads and desserts to round out the feast, and Chamber members weren’t a bit shy about going back for seconds. You’d think everyone would have been napping after stuffing themselves on such a spread, but the BCH program presented by Earl and Karen Philips was received with enthusiasm and some lively questioning after the meal.

The new projection system was obviously a good investment for our organization, as it shows off the BCH activities and members in a really professional way.

High fives to all the cooks and helpers – and to Earl and Karen – for a lot of work that surely gained us a few new friends in the Chamber!
Packing Equipment
By Kent & Charlene Krone

This article was used in the April 2007 issue of Trail Rider Magazine. (www.myhorse.com)

Kent and Charlene Krone are members of the Mission Valley Chapter. They are regular contributors to the nationally distributed Trail Rider Magazine. The following is an article that Trail Rider asked them to write regarding what they use for packing. At that time they only had one pack horse, so things were light!!

The lure of the wilderness! An intangible force tugs at us to explore our vast wild lands. To do so we need good seasoned horses for the trail and proper tack for packing in. We have done pack trips throughout the Western U.S. and the Canadian Rockies. We generally travel alone with our two saddle horses and one pack horse. Over the years we have purchased several versions of the same items to arrive at what works best for travel with one pack horse. We would like to share with you our type of tack and gear for packing in.

SADDLES AND PACK EQUIPMENT:

In general, all gear and tack for you and your horse should be comfortable. The gear should be practical and durable. For one pack horse, equipment also needs to be light weight. The saddles we use are Tennesseans by Crates, available through the National Bridle Shop (1-800-251-3474; www.nationalbridle.com). The reason we use these saddles are two fold. First, they are not heavy and secondly, they are designed for gaited horses, perfectly fitting our Missouri Fox-trotters. We use a standard pad. Beneath this we put a ½ inch wool or felt pad. The underpad protects your thicker upper pad and may also be easily cleaned or replaced. These may be attained from many specialty catalogs. See list at end of article.

Our pack saddle is a decker. We believe these are far superior to the old fashioned sawbuck pack saddle. Deckers are available with plastic bars that swivel to more closely match your pack horse’s back. These are available from Wyoming Outdoor Industries (1-800-725-6853; www.wyomingoutdoor.com). We use a packer’s pad, with a smaller fleece pad, and the ½ inch pad underneath. A one inch cotton lead rope at least 10 feet long gives room for your pack horse to maneuver in places such as tough creek crossings. We have large weekend style saddle bags on our saddle horses. However, be careful not to load too much weight on the horse’s back and kidneys. Our sleeping bags fit into cordura tubes that loop over each saddle horse’s neck. This saves the weight of two sleeping bags on the pack horse. We had these tubes custom made. The company that made them no longer exists. However, Buckstitch (1-800-268-4426; www.buckstitchcanvas.com), would be able to make these items.

Panniers are the containers on your pack horse. There are various types of panniers from hard sided pack boxes, to mantled packs, to over the saddle pack bags. Ours are heavy duty, rubberized-vinyl panniers. These are water proof and are flexible for odd shaped items. Ours were custom made. But, once again the company that designed them went out of business. Why do the companies we do business with go out of business?! However, you may purchase these from Outfitter’s Supply (1-888-467-2256; www.outfitterssupply.com). On top of the panniers we place an H-styled top pack for additional storage. All of this buckles together saving the need for ropes and knots.

KITCHEN-CAMPING GEAR

For our ‘one pack horse’ travel style we searched out light weight camping gear. Light weight tents, sleeping bags, thermorests (roll up air mattress) can all be found at camping and backpackers’ outlets such as REI (1-800-426-4840; www.rei.com) or Cabela’s (1-800-237-4444; www.cabelas.com). We use a one burner stove that connects to a small propane bottle. Three propane bottles are enough for a 10 day trip. Our camp is completed with a roll up table and two small fold up chairs. These items and all camping utensils can be found at the above businesses as well as Wyoming Outdoor Industries.

FOOD

Tastiness, nutrition, and ease of preparation are the three big factors when planning a pack trip menu. A month or so before the pack trip we begin planning a menu for all of our meals and snacks, including beverages.

Meals are built around three main groups: carbohydrates, protein, and fruits/vegetables. Because of having one pack horse, everything possible is dehydrated in order to save weight. Dehydrated carbohydrates are easy to find. There are many varieties of packaged pastas, instant rice, dehydrated potatoes, Bisquick, and grains such as couscous. Crackers and sour dough bread are also good choices. For protein, it’s tough to beat the dehydrated chicken breast and sausage patties from REI. We also take jerky, powdered eggs, and soy granules (some brands are better than others). Our favorite fruits and vegetables are dehydrated at home.

Take three double-bagged paper grocery sacks. Label one “breakfast”, one “lunch”, and the other “dinner”. Place the entire fixings for each meal into a ziplock baggie and label it accordingly. For example, the day#2 breakfast baggie would have everything for a breakfast: oatmeal, powdered milk, and dried fruit. For a ten day trip you would then have nine ziplock breakfast baggies (not counting first morning), ten lunch baggies, and nine dinner baggies (not counting last night). All your meal baggies would be in the properly labeled paper bag. No search and rescue with this system!

This method works well because it saves time, energy, and gives us more time to relax and enjoy the trip. Don’t forget to indulge yourself—in our case, lots of coffee, homemade, chocolate chunk cookies, and a small flask of whiskey—to share with fellow travelers!

Packing continued on page 14
PERSONAL ITEMS

For your own personal items think of things you use on a daily basis, but greatly minimize the amount. For example, instead of packing all of your vitamin and medication bottles, put the needed amounts of each in one bottle.

Items such as soap and toilet paper should be biodegradable. None of us want to see a disgusting, soggy pile of toilet paper or solid waste alongside a trail or hiding behind a stately tree. Women, please dispose of potty papers properly. Solid waste and toilet paper need to be buried at least six inches into the soil and far away from a water source. All of us need to be considerate in sharing the wilderness so that it may appear pristine to those following us.

We also carry a leatherman, available from sporting goods stores. This tool fits on your belt and is an extremely handy multiple tool all in one. Leave home perfume and men’s cologne. Those items attract bears. Better to smell like a horse!

HORSE EQUIPMENT

Plan your horse containment system. When we first arrive at camp we set the horses out on hobbles to graze freely. After a couple hours we put the horses in an electric corral (available at most feed stores). There are various types of poles for electric corrals. For packing, select the small lightweight rods that are about ¼ inch thick. At night the horses are high-lined with tree-savers.

With only one pack horse, we do not take hay or feed. Horses should be used to green grass. Take one or two easy boots and duct tape to use if a shoe is lost. Each horse should have a halter and long lead rope. Take a small horse first-aid kit that includes antibacterial cream, phenylbutazone, and vet wraps. The horses would also appreciate horse fly repellent!

GENERIC PACK LIST

Stock equipment:

Saddles
Saddle bags
Pack saddle
Saddle blankets & pads
Halters & ropes
Headstalls
Hobbles

Personal:

Riding boots
Camp shoes
Shirts/layered clothing
Pants
Jacket
Hat
Gloves

Camping:

Lightweight stove
Fuel
Wind protector for stove
Water proof matches (lighter)
Cookware (lightweight-compactable)
Utensils
Water filter (we use gravity feed)
REI water bladder bag
Two canteens
Trowel/collapsible shovel
Sleeping bags
Thermorests
Tent
Small collapsible chairs
Roll up table
Small flashlight/head lamp
Duct tape
Pillow
Plastic garbage bags
Clothesline
Rope
Soap
Three tarps: under tent, over stored saddles, and for over kitchen area if raining.
Can opener
Moist towelettes
Paper towels
Two plastic collapsible water buckets
Aluminum foil
Zip lock bags (included in food prep)

Other:

Pistol
Pepper spray
Binoculars
Fishing equipment/collapsible rods
Paper & pen
Book
Journal
Playing cards
Solar shower
Satellite phone (see resource list)
Snake bite kit
Required papers for crossing state lines
Maps
And... don’t forget the food!

Some of our greatest moments have occurred during pack trips. It is almost a spiritual experience to go with yourselves and your horses through the wilderness. From frosty mornings, to crackling campfires, vast vistas, horse nuzzlings on your neck, a feisty trout on a fly line, to crossing that next divide are all brought to you via pack trips.

So... get started! Purchase your materials and start with a small two or three day practice pack trip and go from there. Remember what Smoke said in his book, Packin’ In On Mules and Horses, “The best – and for most people - the only reason for packing is to have fun.”
About Your Newsletter

Back Country Horsemen of Montana News is published three times a year by BCH of MT, PO Box 4864, Butte, MT 59701.

Publication dates are June 1, October 1, February 1. Deadline for submission of advertising and articles is the 10th of the preceding month (May 10, September 10, January 10).

The newsletter has three main emphasis areas: (1) issues (2) club activities/volunteer projects (3) light material (i.e., Humor, history, etc.). Please submit a copy that is typewritten or legible handwritten copy is acceptable. Photos should be prints only (no negatives or proofs). Black & white or color is acceptable. Please do not cut or write directly on the photos.

Submit articles, photos, and advertising to Linda Brewer, 2167 N 4th Rd., Huntley, MT 59037. Phone: (406) 698-5880 e-mail: lbrewer@tctwest.net

BCH Chapters are once again responsible for submitting articles for publication in this newsletter. Chapter divisions and deadline date for articles is as follows:

May 10/08 Beartooth, Bitterroot, Cabinet
September 10/08 CMR, East Slope, Flathead
January 10/09 Gallatin, Hi-Line, Judith Basin
May 10/09 Last Chance, Mile High, Mission Valley
September 10/09 Missoula, Selway/Pintler, Three Rivers
January 10/10 Upper Clark Fork, Wild Horse Plans, Beartooth

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A 25% commission will be paid to individuals or chapters.
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PO Box 3563
Great Falls, MT 59404

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307 N Main
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Upper Clark Fork
PO Box 725
Deer Lodge, MT 59722

Wild Horse Plains
PO Box 398
Plains, MT 59859

If you would like to join, please contact a chapter in your area.