



Photo by Kari Schiffman, Bitter Root BCH

Decker Dispatch



Pondering Backcountry Camp

By Lisa Schmidt, East Slope Back Country Horsemen

The teenagers piled out of the van as we tied the last rope for the shade tarp. Sweat already threatened to drip off my nose. Haze from a far-away fire clouded the mountain view.

But the palette of green grass, along with cottonwood and birch trees, complimented rugged rocks hugging the meadow we enjoyed. The horses stood at the trailers, resting with their legs cocked, ready to be stars of the show.

Seven of us Back Country Horsemen volunteers would attempt to teach 14 campers from Alberta, Montana and Mexico what it is like to pack everything a person needs on a horse and ride down a wilderness trail.

The kids were spending a week at Boone and Crockett's ranch on the Rocky Mountain Front. They had already learned how to fly-fish, shoot rifles and find their way in the woods.

Some of the campers owned horses, some had ridden a friend's horse and some had never even touched a horse. Our job was to show them how to be safe, leave no trace in their camping area, and carry just what they need on a pack trip.

But first we imparted a bit of philosophy. Greg Schatz, a builder in Whitefish who spends six to eight weeks each year in the backcountry with his wife, Deb,

and their horses, offered a choice to the young men and women who have been indoctrinated in consumerism.

Buy adventures instead of a big house, Greg advised, budget so your bills cost a fraction of your earning power so you can take the time to live.

Then Greg talked about protecting forest trees when he ties up his horses by using a highline and picking up manure at the trailhead because the biggest complaint hikers have about horses is finding poop in the parking lot.

Then Bob Hermance demonstrated how to saddle a horse and each adult partnered with two kids to configure a pack saddle to a horse. At first, all of those loops and straps looked like a ball of yarn after a cat found it, but soon the kids had the cinches tight, the breast collar in front and the breeching under the tail.

[continued on page 5]

OUR PURPOSES

- To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country, roadless backcountry and wilderness areas.

- To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.

- To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.

- To educate, encourage and solicit active participation by the general public in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horses and people commensurate with our heritage.

- To foster and encourage formation of new state Back Country Horsemen organizations.

- To seek out opportunities to enhance existing areas of recreation for stock users.



Instructors included LeAnn and Bob Hermance, Casey and Zane Drishinski, and Lisa Schmidt from East Slope Back Country Horsemen; and June Burgau and Greg Schatz from Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead.

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Backcountry Grazing – Another Perspective

By Sherri Lionberger, Last Chance Back Country Horsemen

The summer issue of Decker Dispatch contained an article written a number of years ago by Allen Rowley concerning stock feed and grazing in the Bob Marshall Wilderness (although as stated, applicable anywhere in the West). Some of his information was taken from scientific research on feed requirements for animals, as well as looking at grazing conditions at our chosen camping spots. After reading the article, and finding that I disagreed with some of the information, it occurred to me that people simply need to know their own animals, and what they require.

I have weighed out the feed for my animals (both horses and mules) for over 20 years, using a scale in the hay shed. I've had easy keepers, as well as a few hard keepers. Thankfully the hard keepers have always been the herd boss so they could get their "share" as I have also never fed my stock in separate pens. During the spring, summer and fall, my animals get 8 pounds each morning and evening if there is no pasture time. That's a total of 16 pounds a day, where Allen's article indicates a minimum requirement of 26 to 30 pounds per animal. I don't want extra weight going on my animals, and the 16 pounds keeps them in good condition with no extra fat, but also not getting "ribby". The amount will go up in the winter as the temperatures go down to zero and below, but even that increase is always dictated by how cold it will be, plus wind chill.

Allen's article also discussed the need for supplemental feed to be hauled along

on your pack trips depending on your grazing time. For example, he states that if you can only graze a total of 4 hours per day you need an extra 9 pounds of supplemental feed per animal. No supplemental feed would be needed if you graze them for 6 hours. There are so many variables in this discussion that it gets hard to quantify things, but I would like to throw out a couple thoughts. I never owned enough stock in the past to take a lot of supplemental feed, so that wasn't really an option. I have used both electric fences and hobbles to graze. If there is "decent" grazing available at camp, my rule of thumb is 2 hours morning and night when in hobbles. After that, my stock tends to be a lot less interested in grazing and much more interested in wandering down the trails, usually in the direction of the truck. If you contain your stock with a picket or fence, this obviously isn't an issue, but my point is they get plenty full after 2 hours of grazing, and I don't give them supplemental feed. If I have a lay-over location with plenty of graze, I may give them an extra couple hours during the day to make sure they are keeping full.

There is a lot more information in the article regarding how to tell if there is enough graze at a particular site for your animals. Much of this is helpful, especially if you are just starting out packing. My bottom line is knowing your own stock and what they need. If my animals don't need 6 hours of grazing on a site, that leaves something more for the next group to utilize.

Photo by Kathy Hundley.



Decker Dispatch

Letter from the Chair

By Rich Carl
Chairman, BCH Montana

Wow, what a busy summer! I would like to thank all of our members who have worked hard this summer furthering the purposes of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana. Our biggest partner throughout the year is the US Forest Service. Without their help we would not be in business. In June we were fortunate to have Regional Forester Leanne Marten and many of her staff join us for a pack trip into the North Fork of the Blackfoot country. I would like to thank the many other Forest Service personnel and BCHMT members who joined us to make this event a success.

I want to continue our conversation about respect. As I spoke about in my last article, in order to grow BCHMT and all the chapters, our goal has to be to increase our membership. There are many ways that this can be accomplished. No one idea is better than another. An important area of focus is how we communicate with each other and our partners we work with. As our groups transition

into the future we are developing sensitivity training to be proactive with the culture shift going forward. We will be providing more information through our education program.

More and more pressure is coming from the E-bike world as they continue to develop E-bikes that can go further into the mountains. The fact is people like them, and they are growing in popularity. We are seeing this with the Department of Interior and concerns from the BLM and USFS. BCHA is leading the charge to help keep them off non-motorized trails and out of the Wilderness. Talk to your congressional delegation about the importance of keeping non-motorized trails managed for foot and horse travel, and the importance of keeping mechanized travel out of Wilderness.

Rich

Contact Rich at btr@3rivers.net.



USFS personnel visit with members of BCH at the Regional Forester Ride, North Fork of the Blackfoot. Photo by Kathy Hundley.

Regional Forester Ride

By Rich Carl, Chairman BCHMT

The Regional Forester Ride conducted with the USFS took place on the weekend of June 17-19 at the North Fork of the Blackfoot. Monday night we held a dinner at the trailhead and there was a very good turnout of about 65 people. Several organizations were represented including the USFS, Northern Region Pack Train, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, The Wilderness Society and the great members from BCHMT.

Trish and Mike Foster brought

their cooker and served beef and chicken to all of the guests. Many attendees brought salads, desserts and other eats. It was an evening of success.

The following morning, several of us rode into the Scapegoat Wilderness for an overnight camp. Riding and pack stock, camp supplies and packing were provided by Connie and Mack Long. The Northern Region Pack Train provided assistance with pack support as they were there packing in hay and culverts for their

own purpose.

There were several great discussions including current and future trail budgets, steady funding sources for trails into the future, recreation as a higher priority, bikes in the Wilderness including the Blue Joint and Sapphire Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), the access situation in the Crazy Mountains, and the local and national volunteer saw program.

The three-day event went well. Thank you all who supported this event.

Not once did I think about work

By Jake Barzen, recipient of the BCHMT Packing Skills Class Scholarship in 2018

Not once... The thought resonated with me as I reflected on the trip. Not once did I think about “work.”

In early 2018, I was hired by the state of Montana to be a game warden in the Hardin District. Since then, not a day has gone by when I did not think about work in some regard. In part, it is the nature of the job as game wardens often work at least a little bit every day. Mostly, though, it is because I love my job and enjoy doing it. Either way, for me to go five days without a call from dispatch, checking an e-mail, or thinking about a law being broken was something I had not experienced in this early stage of my career. Heck, I should do that more often!

During these five days in early June, I was fortunate to be enrolled in a “packing skills” class sponsored by Bob Marshall Wilderness Outfitters, owned by Connie and Mack Long. The class was made available to me through a Back Country Horsemen of Montana scholarship, given to younger folks who have an interest in packing. For five days, eight other students and I camped in and around the Scapegoat Wilderness, learning how to pack from the Longs and their knowledgeable staff. We started with the basic preparation and horsemanship, practiced mantying loads, packed the loads onto mules, and learned how to safely lead a pack string down a trail. In camp we discussed methods and tactics

for practicing Leave No Trace, and the impact that we have as visitors if we don’t mitigate our footprint. By the end of the trip, each student led a loaded mule out of the wilderness without causing any wrecks.

Before my current job, I lived in Colorado and worked for an outfitter in the San Juan Mountains. There, I was christened in the art of packing, but, being in Colorado, we used exclusively sawbuck saddles with canvas panniers on horse pack animals. Moving to Montana, I knew that if I wanted to keep packing I would have to learn to use a Decker saddle with mantied loads placed on top of mules! As the packing season approached, I saw a flyer for this course in a Back Country Horsemen monthly newsletter. That same day I wrote out an application to attend through BCHMT.

With my prior experience with sawbuck saddles, I was very interested in the differences between the two styles of pack saddles as I learned the ways of the Decker. To start, a Decker is less forgiving in its weight distribution. With the hard frame, a sawbuck saddle will keep itself upright longer than a Decker (I’m sure the double cinch helps with this as well). That forces a Decker packer to be more skilled in how to distribute weight on an animal. A Decker is also much more versatile with how you can load an animal. I was fascinated by barrel slings and the stories

of packers hauling in long lumber between two pack animals. Of course, there are always many ways to do something, but that is something I’ve never seen with sawbucks!

As fewer and fewer members of my generation have the interest or ability to pack, I have a unique opportunity to continue the old tradition of using stock to haul equipment into backcountry areas. Through both work and play, I hope to use what I’ve learned to continue exploring Montana. The adventure, awe, and solace of spending time in the backcountry, as well as the protection of the resources we have in these remote areas, are aspects of Montana that I hope to enjoy, promote, and share as I move forward with my life and career. My hat is off to the Back Country Horsemen of Montana and Bob Marshall Wilderness Outfitters for giving me the opportunity to learn from folks who know a lot more than me!

On June 13th, I drove away from the North Fork of the Blackfoot trailhead, letting my mind wander through the previous five days and the country I had just explored. Although we had covered a fair number of miles, the sight in the rear-view mirror displayed the vastness of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and I realized that I had hardly touched the surface. “Well,” I thought to myself, “looks like I’ll have to come back.”





National Director's Column

By John Chepulis (Beartooth BCH)
National Director, BCH Montana

Public Land Issues

Minimum Tool Analysis:

In early May, the R2 Regional Forester in Denver approved a minimum tool analysis, which included a six-week window for limited chainsaw use in the Weminuche and South San Juan Wilderness areas. The purpose was to clear trails where beetle kill and downed timber posed significant challenges to access in these wilderness areas.

By the end of May, a legal challenge was filed to prevent implementation of chainsaw assisted trail work. BCHA and BCH CO continue to assess the situation trying to determine whether or not our intervention might move the much needed trail work forward.

In June, Region 2 withdrew its approval of a minimum tool analysis for using chainsaws. The withdrawal came after the lawsuit and an unusually high snowpack.

Limited Entry Permit System:

In early May, the FS issued a final decision that puts equestrians into a proposed Limited Entry Permit System for three Wilderness areas in the Central Cascades Wilderness.

On Aug. 19th, the BCHA Executive Committee approved the recommendations from the Public Lands Committee for Randy Rasmussen to seek legal counsel with the purpose of determining if BCHA has a case in regards to the US Forest Service Central Cascades Wilderness permitting decision and Environmental Assessment (EA). The USFS

appears to be violating their own policies by their proposal to issue "Limited Entry" permits in these wilderness areas.

NEPA Regulations:

In June, BCHA reviewed in detail the US Forest Service's June 2019 proposal to revise its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. The Agency claims the proposal is intended to add flexibility, tailor necessary environmental analysis to fit conditions, and reduce redundancy in analysis. The agency would do so by adding new Categorical Exclusions that would negate the need for analysis of many projects that currently require an Environmental Assessment accompanied by public review and comment. Several new or expanded Categorical Exclusions are proposed including those for travel and recreation related facilities construction as well as those for road and trail closures.

E-Bikes:

On August 29th, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt issued an order that will require the National Park Service to open non-motorized trails to e-bikes. It appears this won't happen overnight as each agency would have to enter into a year-long rule making process, with public comment, in order to create regulations consistent with this Secretarial Order.

John

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Pondering Backcountry Camp

[continued from front page]

Mantying the packs confused some of the kids. Knots are intimidating when a teacher whips through them with hands of muscle memory.

One of my kids wiped the sweat from his forehead and said "I can't do this."

And then he did. One loop at a time.

A couple of times, the loop of the half-hitch ended up backward. We tested the knot. It disappeared, leaving the manty hanging by a straight rope. Immediate direct consequences make an effective teacher.

When the group gathered under the shade again, I mentioned that I had not learned to pack until I was 40. In fact, I didn't know how to ride a horse until I learned in my 20s.

Fourteen pairs of eyes widened. I wasn't sure whether it was because they couldn't believe I am over 40 or because they can't imagine riding a horse in the mountains at such an ancient age.

Several of the kids played with grass or braided their hair as we spoke about horses and mountains and quiet trails, but a teacher never

knows who she might touch.

A young math geek might find courage because he tried again to twist a rope into a half-hitch.

Or years from now, an urban arena rider might remember that old woman who rode her horse in the mountains and give it a try herself.

Maybe, just maybe, someday one of them will take time off from her ranch to listen to the mountain birds sing as her horse clip-clops down the trail. Then she'll come home and tell a bunch of teenagers all about it.

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

Find more information on our website:
www.bchmt.org

Safe Trail Riding

Submitted by Henry Glenn, Gallatin Valley Back Country Horsemen



Safe trail riding makes for fun riding. When there are unsafe conditions for either rider or horse then no one is having fun. Let us review some common problems we see on our trail rides.

Riders:

Think about the weather; we can have every kind of weather in every month in Montana. Prepare for the worst and you will never be caught unprepared. Take extra clothes to layer up and always have a rain coat and hat of some kind. I always have some way to start a fire.

Sometimes things don't go as planned. You could find yourself spending the night in the back country. Will it be the night from hell or will it be an adventure that you tell your grandkids about? How you are prepared will determine which story you have to tell. A fire, water and a

space blanket could determine how your story ends. In our fast paced, modern, digital world we often forget that Montana back country is missing all this technology and help is not minutes away. We must be prepared to survive on our own; 911 is not an option.

A trip through my saddle bags is a journey through my past experiences. I carry a Leatherman, knife, flashlight, leather string, nylon cord, fire starting tool, GPS, space blanket, food and water. Practice with the fire starting tool of your choice—it is of no value if you can't use it. Food is usually jerky and granola bars. Someone on the ride needs a first aid kit and the knowledge to use it.

Boots are a very critical part of our equipment. I wear boots that are both safe to ride in and comfortable to walk in. Imagine walking several miles in uncomfortable boots over rough terrain and the blisters that you would get and the picture becomes clear. I tend to go with things that can't break because Murphy is like a mole on my back.

Remember, preparing is also fun and makes the ride memorable for the scenery instead of the wet, cold and miserable day that you forgot your slicker.

Read more tips on safety with horses in the next issue of the Decker Dispatch.

VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteer hours are due
to John Chepulis by September 30th.
If your chapter hasn't turned in their hours,
please do so today!
Contact John at
barcdiamond@gmail.com.

Northern Region Pack Train shows 'em how it's done!

By Kathy Hundley, Selway-Pintler Wilderness Back Country Horsemen

Casey Burns and the Northern Region Pack Train (NRPT) were the highlight of this year's BCHMT Youth Packing Camp at Indian Meadows on August 1-4. Casey, Trent his assistant, and the eight mules provided the majority of the education along with packing the camp gear and supplies. After dropping camp for the kids and BCHMT volunteers, Casey and the mules packed hay into Webb Lake Cabin for the Lincoln Ranger District.

The mission of the Northern Region Pack Train is to represent the Forest Service to the public through education and community service and to complete backcountry packing and work projects across the region. Casey and his mules reach out to the public through sports shows, classroom presentations, and Ninemile Wildlands Training Center classes that include responsible stock use, and Wilderness/ Leave No Trace ethics. They also represent the Forest Service in parades, demonstrations, expos and other events. Work projects fill out their busy summer schedule by hauling gear to supply trail crews or remote guard stations, packing out fencing, and packing out equipment after backcountry fires.

There is an application process and requests must be received before January 31st of each year. All requests are carefully considered by the pack train manager and a board of directors, composed of Forest Service personnel and public citizens. It is helpful for each request to be sponsored by a Forest Service ranger district.

There are 12 National Forests and one National Grassland in Region One, and the pack train tries to visit as many as possible each year. There is no cost to requesting units within Region One.

In 2018, they completed 26 work projects, packing 624 mule loads of equipment, supplies and materials

into remote roadless areas. This amounted to 119,808 pounds of freight moved over 711 miles of trail. They presented three formal education/training programs to over 88 individuals and participated in two parades.

Eleven students ranging in age from 12 to 17 got the experience of a lifetime watching and learning the skill of packing from Casey and his matching mules along with a Wilder-

ness campfire chat. Saturday's hike to Heart Lake gave them the opportunity to swing Pulaskis tidying up some water bars and then a couple hours of play time swimming in the lake!

Thanks to Jessica Shaw, the camp cook, for some wonderful meals and a first for me...Jiffy Pop popcorn over a campfire. That takes some practice and is a skill all its own!



Instructors included Kathy Hundley from the Selway-Pintler Wilderness Back Country Horsemen, Elle Eberts, June Burgau and Greg Schatz from Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead, and Casey Burns with the Northern Region Pack Train.

August 29, 2019

To all the members of Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead (BCHF):

Last weekend we had an extraordinary experience. Driving to a Forest Service cabin located between Glacier National Park and the Great Bear Wilderness (part of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex), some 80 back country horsemen (including their families) gathered with their stock and dogs and participated in the first ever gathering of this type. There was trail riding into the wilderness, up to the CDT trail, and to other beautiful places nearby. Maps were provided and information on the details of each trail was provided by BCH of the Flathead members. Stock trailers were provided to take groups to trailheads.

There were tours of the local geologic features in the area. There were presentations in the evening about elk and grizzly activities in the area provided by local biologists; there were fantastic discussion groups on how to expand our activities and membership in our efforts to promote good practices in the backcountry and continue to encourage and support our equine friends on our trails.

There was amazing camp food, breakfast and dinner; even a steak dinner one night—10 oz. New York strips done to perfection. The local Lions Club drove all the way up to our camp to help out too! And of course amazing fellowship, campfire singing and talk. Every single detail of this event was thought out by the Flathead chapter.

Imagine the convenience of riding all day and returning to camp, seeing to your horses, having an evening libation and discussing the ride of the day, and then strolling over to the group area to enjoy a wonderful meal that you did not have to prepare or clean up after. And after all that, to be thanked profusely and daily by your hosts simply for showing up! The generosity of this group is simply mind blowing. Most of us were struck dumb by it and we do not believe we showed our appreciation (at

the time) at the level it deserved.

This event began on Thursday and ended on Sunday and those attending did not pay a single cent. Compare that to a horse show or any other equine event or conference that many of us attend!

BCH of the Flathead, under the project leadership of Roland Cheek and Rick Maedje, devoted hundreds of hours organizing, fundraising and putting this astonishing event together. It seemed at times that every single member of the Flathead chapter was everywhere helping out, offering assistance, advice or help at any moment during the weekend. We made at least two or three calls before the event to Jonah Libsack for help with logistics and she was instantly responsive. We know that many others were doing the same and the Flathead handled it all.

The very best part of the event was the ability to socialize with members including meeting their families and their equine partners. While we often collaborate at meetings and conventions, most of us have never met the equines with whom we work side by side. Suddenly we met our BCH friends with their horses and mules and donkeys. And we saw how their partnerships worked with these hard working animals.

All weekend, Roland Cheek, one of the last of our founders of BCH and the instigator of this event, asked why people came. And I thought about it all weekend and reached the following conclusion:

1. First of all, our founding organization, our mothership, called out to all of us and so we came. We came to pay our respects to Roland and to the organization that leads us, that inspires us, and that helps us see how important our work is.

2. We came for the fellowship with all of our members across Montana because we never want to miss the chance to connect with people who understand and value wilderness and how important it is not just for us but for the world.

3. We came to meet the others who help our members, family and animal: spouses, children, pets, and of course our amazing equines.

4. We came for the fun...but we stayed for the work that we must do.

BCH, like many organizations, has great challenges. We do hard work and we are aging. We work endlessly to find younger members. We work hard to expand our membership. And we bring much to anyone who wants to be involved.

The benefits of membership are many and include:

1. You will work hand in glove with the Forest Service and be able to participate in many of their activities.

2. You will have an inside track regarding information on trails and facilities in the wilderness including being able to use facilities not available to the general public.

3. You will become fit and more capable as the work requires the ability to clear trails, build trails and bridges.

4. You will benefit by the training the Forest Service provides: valuable training on the use of crosscut saws and chainsaws and you will be certified for this work anywhere you go. You will be trained in first aid, bear awareness safety and defensive horse safety.

5. You will learn a lot about horse packing, wilderness camping and wilderness ethics including the latest best practices.

6. You will be respected for the volunteer work you do, by other users of the wilderness, and by the professionals in the Forest Service.

7. You will never regret this work. Ever.

Most of us during the weekend were quite literally struck dumb by the generosity shown by all the hard-working people from the Flathead chapter. Members kept THANKING us for coming and all we did was show up, pay attention and ride in some of the most beautiful country in the US. How to thank you for this? How to show our appreciation?

I know Roland would respond by telling us to get to work and figure out how to do better with our membership and our efforts. How to sustain an organization that he and many others established so many years ago.

It IS hard work and there IS much for us to do. But we believe that we and this organization will sustain because it does important work and because we know it and will work toward it.

It is not much of a promise, but it is the best we can do.

Meanwhile, THANK YOU BCH of the Flathead, and to each and every person who worked so hard to make one the best and most memorable weekends in our memory, and thank you to all the amazing sponsors who know how valuable this organization is to Montana and its wilderness.

Sue Mohr and Howard Reid
 Tony and Lyndsay Smith
 Last Chance Back Country Horsemen



Photos by
 Jessica Shaw,
 Annette Leverington
 and
 Dan Oursland.



4-H Trail & Packing

Pack Trips 2019

By Kaj Haagerup, NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen

This summer I was fortunate enough to participate in two pack trips into the Bob Marshall Wilderness to do volunteer work. These trips were made possible by outstanding 4-H leaders as well as the NorthWest Montana Back Country Horsemen. I am very thankful for these people. They have helped me to become a better horseman and enabled me to do volunteer work that will benefit wilderness users.

The first pack trip was to Black Bear Cabin and Salmon Forks Cabin. Our crew consisted of Alden Totten, the 4-H Leader, Patrick Totten, Melanie Totten, Seline Totten, and myself. Our ages are 17, 16, 13, and 16. We arrived at the Meadow Creek Trailhead on a Wednesday night where we highlined the horses and slept in the back of the trailer in hammocks. The following morning we woke early, fed horses, and set to work making our loads. After we finished making loads we saddled our horses and headed out. We only needed two pack stock on this trip because the Forest Service supplied our feed since we were doing work for them.

Our ride took us 14 miles to Black Bear Cabin and consisted of spectacular views and plenty of new experiences. While we did get caught in some stormy weather, it was an enjoyable ride. My 13 year old gelding, Leroy, was a little hot from the start but quickly settled in. This was his first trip into the Bob Marshall. He crossed the suspension bridge and another bridge that is 100+ feet tall with zero issues and carried me to the cabin safely.

We overnighted at Black Bear Cabin where we feasted on wild strawberries and huckleberries. Alden was lucky enough to find a seven-point elk shed while we were picking huckleberries. I caught a few fish on my fly rod and watched a herd of elk that were hanging around the cabin, hoping to steal some alfalfa no doubt, before turning in for the night. In the middle of the night two of Totten's horses, Bo and Boomerang, jumped out of the corral to

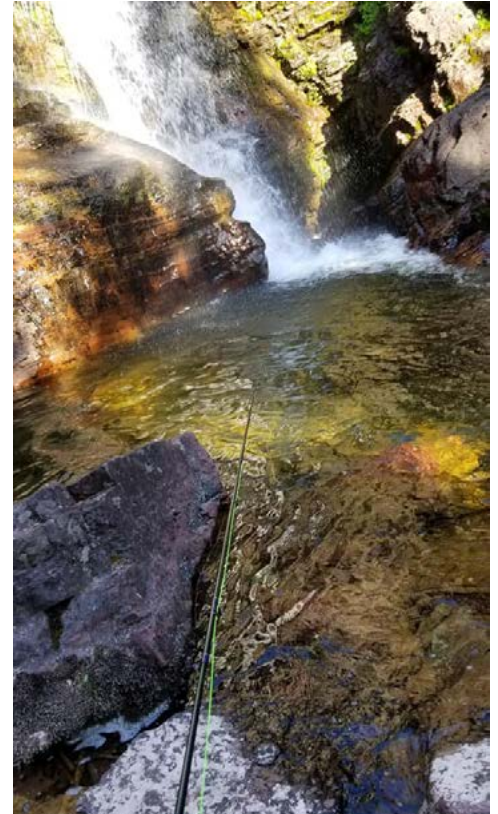
avoid the elk, but luckily didn't go far.

We packed up and rode to Salmon Forks Cabin in the morning. This ride was only seven miles and after getting settled in, our work began. We were tasked with tearing down the perimeter jack fence and stacking it to be burned. It was not possible to complete the entire fence in the time we had as there was 1.6 miles, but we completed the entire section along the South Fork of the Flathead River in just a day and a half. In the evening we fished the creek from Big Salmon Lake to the South Fork and caught many trout for dinner.

Sunday morning we loaded up early once again and headed back the way we'd come. We had a 21 mile ride ahead of us to the trailhead. From calculating our speed on previous rides we predicted to arrive back at the trailer in seven hours. Had we ridden straight out as planned we would have made it in almost seven hours exactly. About six hours into our ride we came around a bend and about 300 yards ahead of us watched an outfitter wreck. We watched in horror as two horses tumbled down the slope. We turned around and rode to the nearest spot where two horses could pass each other and waited for one of the outfitters to ride past with their string because they could not be stopped on the bank. We found trees and tied off our horses and ran to the second outfitter's assistance. When Melanie and I reached the outfitter he was resaddling one of the horses he had stood up. The other horse was still laying on its side with its head downhill and both loads still attached. Quickly Mel and I pulled the loads and the saddle and dragged the horse around so it could get to its feet. Both horses appeared unharmed aside from a few scrapes. After finding a path and getting the horses up to the trail we learned the cause of the wreck was a horse that had never packed before being sent up the trail and tied fast to the D rings of the horse ahead. A valuable learning experience for us all. We then headed our separate ways. The

rest of the ride went as planned and we arrived hot, tired, and safe eight hours after setting out.

Photos: Fishing hole. Salmon Forks fence.



The second pack trip I went on was to Pendant Cabin and Shaw Cabin, both of which are in the Bob Marshall. On this trip we overnighted at the Owl Creek Packer Camp in similar fashion as we had on the last pack trip. We woke up early, made our loads, and headed up the trail before the 9:00 am deadline for uphill traffic. This was my first trip riding and pulling my own stock. I rode my gelding Leroy once again and packed my mare Peanut. This was her first trip as a pack horse.

The ride went great, it was about 15 miles to our first stop at Pendant Cabin. After settling in we painted half the cabin and hiked a few miles with the crosscut from the cabin to cut a 20-inch log out of the trail. In the evening we hiked to Big Salmon Falls and picked huckleberries before going to sleep. The cabin was pretty stuffy with our whole crew inside but we made it work.

The next morning we leveled the outhouse that started to fall into the hole and finished painting the cabin. This didn't take us long so we hiked to the falls again to fish, swim, and pick two gallons of huckleberries. That night Melanie wrote in the log book how uneventful our trip had been but that was about to change. After we got back from our hike we met two men waiting for us at our cabin. They were leaders from a school trip that had noticed our horses when they hiked past earlier in the day. One of their students dropped her bag on her ankle and was unable to walk and was fairly sure it was broken. She had broken that ankle twice before and said it felt the same. They asked us if we knew of any outfitter going out with empty horses that their student could ride. We did not, but offered her to come with us and ride one of our horses to Shaw Cabin and then out. They said they would talk to their student and let us know when we rode past the following day.

Minutes after those two departed two more adults and three kids arrived leading three pack horses. They came by to say hi and see if the corral was open. Noticing our 4-H packing shirts one of them asked us about the program and said they had "Heard good things about the

program and the work we'd done". It felt really good to hear that. Melanie, Seline, Patrick and I walked with them to help them set up their camp. We learned this was their first trip into the Bob with horses. We ended up helping them unload their stock and teaching them about packing. They had never set up a highline or even heard of tree savers which they didn't have. One of the adults commented that they now realized how little they knew and how unprepared they were. They were fascinated by the information we gave them and the knots we showed them. They said they were going to join 4-H to take the packing program next year.

On our last night at Pendant Cabin I slept outside by the fire to avoid the stuffy hot cabin. Wrapped in manties and my sleeping bag I stayed plenty warm and enjoyed watching the stars.

We woke up and headed to Shaw Cabin the following morning. Along the way we picked up the injured hiker and one of the chaperones from their group. The hiker, Daphne, rode Melanie's horse Bo, and Melanie hiked. It didn't take long to ride about seven miles to Shaw Cabin.

At Shaw we moved the outhouse we built last year over the hole and fished the rest of the day. I caught a decent sized cutthroat out of Gordon Creek. We slept in our hammocks for the final night of our trip and had a blast.

The next morning we made our loads and headed out. Daphne rode Bo again and we put her backpack as a top pack on Peanut. Peanut did fantastic. We made good time on the way out through Gordon Pass and down to the packer camp and arrived safe once again without issue.

These pack trips made this summer one of the best summers of my life. I cannot wait to return to the Bob once again. This summer I rode 80 plus miles total in the backcountry and hope to double that if not more next year. I owe a ton to the 4-H Trail & Packing Program and all the amazing instructors. If possible, I hope to be able to give kids the same opportunities I'm getting by becoming a 4-H leader in the future.



Photos: Shaw outhouse. Kaj Haagerup 2019.

Photographers: We love to see your chapter's photos in the newsletter. Remember to shoot high resolution photos (at least 1MB) with well-lit faces. And don't forget your personal protective equipment (PPE) when sawing.

Skookum Passport in Time Project

By Randy Velin, Missoula Back Country Horsemen

On July 8-10, BCH of Missoula provided pack support for the USFS Passport in Time lookout restoration project on the Skookum Butte lookout, located about nine miles south of Lolo Pass on the Montana-Idaho border. The packers were Dan Harper with one riding horse and two pack mules, and Randy Velin and his granddaughter Kara with two riding horses and one pack mule. We arrived on Monday at about 10:00am and set up our trailers and stock highlines. The restoration crew and cook arrived around 11:00am and set up their camp and cook tents. As some of the crew did that, the others started to unload a trailer of tools and supplies that we would be packing in by mules. There were many tools of different shapes and sizes along with varying weights.

They told us the trail in was about 1.6 miles and gained 1,200 feet in elevation in the last mile. Little did we know at that time how steep and tight the switchbacks were going to be. We started to mantle up the first load of tools. Dan had brought along his pack boards and these worked great to strap the different sized items to. We made some pretty tight packs; they weighed in at about 93 pounds each. They were a little tough to get up on the tall mule but we made it. Then we made two pannier loads for the other two mules; these were of smaller hand and power tools.

We then started up the trail. We went over a small rise about a quarter of a mile and then the trail dropped down into a wet bottom land. The recent rains made the creek crossing very boggy and the stock had trouble getting through. One mule decided to make some jumps to get out and we had to retrieve him, but the load stayed on luckily or maybe good packing?

We proceeded up the trail to where it crossed an old FS logging road and this also had a steep bank with a muddy bottom. We made it through and up the switchbacks to

the top without any problems. Most of the crew had passed us on the way in and were waiting to unload the stock and carry the stuff the last 500 feet up the rock pile to the lookout.

We decided to look for another route and after talking with Sydney, the project coordinator, she said we could take the FS road around to circumvent the first bog. This would add about a half mile but would be well worth it to keep from bogging the animals.

The next day we made two trips without much trouble. On the return down they had 12 windows to come back with us; one had all the glass gone but the others still had glass in them. We mantled them up with the pack boards on the pack saddle side to guard the glass and hopefully keep it from breaking. We made it back with no glass breakage.

On the second trip up we had to haul a long stabilizer jack. It was about nine feet long and the inner part would slide out so one was eight feet long and the inside part was six feet long. We hung one of these on each side of my mule and I hiked them back up as far as I could, which was about six to eight inches from the ground. While we were on the road, they rode well and quiet. But when we hit the uphill switchbacks with big rocks, stumps and logs, the pipes would hit them and play a tune. The workers said they could hear us coming from a mile away. The jacks did ride well despite making music.

The next morning we hauled up various sizes of OSB wood sheeting ranging from 72" x 41". We had 12 sheets altogether and made it up without any problem. We had to load them with basket hitches as we had more height on some switchback corners that we did width.

It was a great crew to work with and they were very glad we could help pack in the items needed for restoration. The project may take up to two years to complete and we hope to help them again if needed.



Lesson Well Learned - "The Art of Calm"

Submitted by Wade Murphy, Upper Clark Fork Back Country Horsemen



One very valuable lesson I have learned over the years of being a horseman is the art of calming a horse. As I mature in my horsemanship I focus more and more on how my actions affect my animal's behavior. I have a fairly aggressive personality and during my early years of horsemanship I was often guilty of being too aggressive with my horses. I was never abusive, but my aggressive training style would often make my horse excited and energetic.

When I joined Upper Clark Fork BCH I often rode with a veteran horseman from our chapter. I was quickly impressed by his group of animals. He always seemed to have the quiet animals on our rides. The more I watched this veteran cowboy the more I learned. He demands respect from his animals but he always does it in a calm and confident manner. He never gives his animals a reason to fear him. He never adds to their excitement by being too aggressive, yelling or abusing his animals.

In contrast I started observing other horsemen who always seemed to be either in a wreck or on the verge of one. They were always loud and very strong handed with their stock, and their animals responded accordingly. I watched and learned...

Because of a horse's intimidating size many people feel like they need to be loud and strong to control them. This is not true. Horses are extremely sensitive. They feel a fly land on them. We certainly don't need a 2x4 to get their attention. They are also very aware of what is happening around them. You don't need to scream and yell for them to notice you.

I do a lot of ground work with my animals. I make them move their feet in all directions. I start with the slightest pressure and then ramp up to be as firm as necessary. Very soon the horse realizes what you want

"There is nothing better than riding a good horse through new country."

Gus McCrae~Lonesome Dove



and they learn to respond with the lightest cue. Moving a horse's feet from the ground is a huge part of gaining their respect. With that respect comes their trust.

The second critical part of ground work is desensitizing. Time spent desensitizing your animal to lots of "spooky" objects pays off for the entire life of the animal. The proper balance between respect (moving their feet) and desensitizing makes for a calm and confident animal. It is very important to remain quiet and calm as you do your groundwork. Your energy will transfer to your animal. If these concepts are new to you find a horseman you trust to help you out. Make sure you pick a horseman that has calm animals! There are also lots of great videos available to help you learn.

My latest project is a five year old mule that I picked up last fall. She has not been handled much and is very nervous. She is teaching me a whole new set of lessons as I continue to learn the "art of calm"! I still have a lot to learn.



Judith Basin teams up with FS and MWA to repair the Ulhorn Trail

By Dana Leininger, Judith Basin Back Country Horsemen

The Judith Basin Chapter of Back Country Horsemen (JB BCH) teamed up with the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Montana Wilderness Association (MWA) August 23rd, 24th, and 25th to repair hazardous places on the Ulhorn Trail that follows Half Moon Pass Creek up to Half Moon Pass in the Big Snowy Mountains of Central Montana.

This trail is used by both foot and horseback travelers and had become overgrown with woody species of plants, and the trail tread surface had become very narrow and soft in many places with a steep drop off on the creek side of the trail. Prior to this work weekend, scouting trips up the trail by USFS personnel and JB BCH identified areas that needed work-arounds for the dangerous areas for horse travel and retreading work for the very narrow sections of the trail tread surface.

Nine volunteers representing the MWA from all around the state (Bozeman, Billings, Livingston, Helena, Missoula, Thompson Falls, Whitefish, Butte, and Lewistown) gathered and camped out at the Ulhorn Trailhead Thursday evening and were promptly welcomed to Central Montana with a serious downpour and rain throughout the night.

At 8:00am Friday morning, they were chipper and ready to don backpacks and hike up the trail to begin the work of creating two work-arounds for livestock, surface retreading, and brush removal four feet either side of the center of the trail. The JB BCH provided support to the MWA volunteers by using pack

horses and mule to carry the heavy loppers, shovels, Pulaskis, pick axes, chainsaw and fuel, and extra water up the trail to designated work sites. The USFS representative from Neihart was our sawyer.

The first work site was about two miles up the trail and the second work site was about two miles beyond that. The MWA lead, Sonny, gave a talk and on the job demonstration of how we were supposed to do the work in a safe and effective manner. The first day we worked until about 3:10pm, having accomplished constructing work-arounds at both sites and a wonderful retread and brush removal at the first site, then hiking out to the trailhead, arriving there around 5:00pm.

Saturday morning we hiked up to the second site and began working back toward the trailhead brush whacking and retreading as we went. Trail maintenance on four miles of trail is quite the task, and we users of this trail in Central Montana are very grateful for the MWA volunteers, all but one being senior citizens, and the USFS for dedicating time and effort in repairing as much of this trail as possible in two and one half days of work. This was a very pleasurable group effort including young and older folks from many different walks of life. It truly was a great weekend along a beautiful creek in the heart of Montana.



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Recap of 2019 summer for Last Chance BCH

By Darlene Horne, Last Chance Back Country Horsemen

For the last several years Last Chance BCH has been the sole trail crew for the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Although fairly small at 28,460 acres, the Gates presents multiple challenges including the 40,000 acre Meriwether Fire which scorched much of the area in 2007, rugged terrain, pine beetle infestation, and lack of water. LCBCB is further indebted to clear the Gates due to a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant in 2018.

While 2018 was a work intensive year to get the trails cleared, time has not been friendly to the beetle killed pine trees and fire killed firs. Multiple areas in the central portion of the wilderness are north facing slopes where the burned trees are now finally starting to come down. On the eastern side of the wilderness the beetle killed lodge pole has had enough and has started to come down by the hundreds. Coupled with a snowy winter and a wet, stormy spring, 2019 has seen much of the same.

Work on the Gates began in May with a small group clearing Refrigerator Canyon to the wilderness boundary and a small crew clearing from the Big Log Trailhead to the Hunters Trail junction. On June 1st, National Trails Day, a larger crew was assembled. After a rendezvous at Hunters Trailhead 22 people ranging in age from 8 to 60 were split between two trailheads. The Hunters Crew was horse/mule back while the Refrigerator crew was mostly on foot and tasked with a previously scouted blowdown patch of close to 100 trees.

The Hunters Trail is a steep, shadeless, somewhat hated trail but had surprisingly less down trees than usual in the lower part until it transitions to the higher north facing slopes that were burned. Work progressed slower at this point and with a strict turnaround time of 3:00pm in place due to previous overly long excursions, just over seven miles was accomplished on this day. The Refrigerator crew made incredible progress and had the blowdown

patch out of the way and the trail cleared to the Bear Prairie junction by 2:00pm.

In the weeks since, small groups have been chipping away at the last remaining miles of trail. As of this writing the furthest reaches still remain to be cleared but hopefully by the end of summer the "Gates" will be fully accessible...until the next windstorm.

The Elkhorns were a similar scenario, we had seven sawyers, four swampers that spent two days, (132 man hours) and only a mile of trail was cleared. We are still working on it to allow us to get in with stock to pack Forest Service sign posts.

The Bob Marshall Foundation pack into Landers Fork went without a hitch. Trail crews are always happy when we have enough animals to pack the tools, food and their back packs.

LCBCB recognized Joe and Theresa Meek, who are leaving for Seattle, by providing \$100 for the Packing Skills Class scholarship in Joe's name. Joe traveled last year to Magruder, Idaho, a neighboring youth camp, and the BCHMT youth camp at Indian Meadows to help teach a new generation of young packers. He will be missed by all.



Photos:
Elkhorn trail clearing.
Elkhorns after clearing.
Gates of the Mountains trail to clear.
Landers Fork pack.





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Falls Creek purchase provides public access to 26,000 acres near Augusta

THOMAS PLANK thomas.plank@helenair.com, Independent Record, August 27, 2019. Photo by Thom Bridge. Reprinted with permission.

Dan Barrett remembers running cattle with his father deep in the aspens behind Falls Creek. He calls them some of his happiest memories.

Barrett was the owner of the 442-acre Falls Creek property, which abuts the Dearborn River and the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. The elk-heavy and scenery-rich property that Barrett has spent 66 years of his life ranching also provides access to more than 26,000 acres of public land near Augusta.

And thanks to a \$2.46 million deal brokered by Barrett and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Falls Creek property is now open to the public.

The newest addition to the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, the Falls Creek property is a classic image of the West. A waterfall pours into a crystalline pool and a wide val-

ley shivers with aspens. Hunters are already looking at the area, where elk are over-objective, and imagining the possibilities of hunting season in 2019.

Along with the RMEF, Lewis and Clark County provided a significant amount of funds to get the property open this year. The county paid \$1.4 million from its Open Lands Fund to help move the project to completion and was a key partner in getting the space open to the public.

Blake Henning, chief communications officer for the RMEF, added that the United States Forest Service, Montana's Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department and the United States Congress had also been key partners in finishing the Falls Creek project.

"There's significance in its beauty and use and its great public access," Lewis and Clark County Commissioner Andy Hunthausen said. "It's the whole nine yards."

The property had been closed to the public for a decade, but over the past few years Barrett had been working with the RMEF, Lewis and Clark County and other partners to make the area public.

"This is what it's all about to be a Montanan," Lt. Gov. Mike Cooney said about the Falls Creek acquisition. "To have access to these kinds of lands ... if you're someone who hunts, who fishes, who hikes, this answers all of those needs."

