As I feel the crisp, cool mornings and see the changing colors of fall, I wonder if we had a summer this year. We seem to have accomplished a lot even thou it was short.

At our spring meeting with Region 1, we invited Leslie Weldon, Regional Forester, and some of her staff to a potluck and overnight camp-out. She accepted and on the evening of June 28 we held a potluck at the Monture Ranger Station near Ovando, MT. Thanks to all who showed up to meet Leslie and make this potluck a success. The evening ended with Forest Service and Back Country Horseman sitting around the campfire getting to know each other. The next morning, after breakfast, Smoke Elser with Dave Crawford's help did a horse safety class before we all mounted and headed up Monture Creek to a preselected camp site. The rest of the day was filled with conversation with Forest Service personnel, and sharing our concerns and accomplishments. During this trip we all experienced “leave no trace camping”, horse safety, and correct handling of our stock. A special thanks to Smoke Elser, Mack and Connie Long, Ken Ausk, Rena Johnson, Dave Crawford, Deb Schatz and members of the Missoula Chapter who helped with packing, cooking, set-

(Chairman, continued on Page 2)
ting up camp etc. Forest Service personnel attending were Leslie Weldon, Regional Forester; Chip Weber, Flathead Forest Supervisor; Dave Bull, Region 1 Director; Joni Packard, Region 1 Volunteer Coordinator; Tim Love, District Ranger, Seeley Lake; and Shannon Connolly, Natural Resources Specialist, Seeley Lake. Thanks to everyone for making this trip a success.

On Friday, September 16th, Mark Himmel, Rich Carl and I meet with Shannon Freix and a PBS film crew at Flesher Pass to film some footage for a Continental Divide Trail Documentary, to be aired next April. That evening, Mark & Sandy Himmel, and Bonnie and I attended the Coalition to Protect the Rocky Mountain Front's annual BBQ at the Country Club in Choteau MT. During the business meeting I was able to reaffirm Backcountry Horseman of Montana's commitment and support of the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act. The next day Bonnie and I helped the Charlie Russell Chapter with a trail project in the Little Belts.

On September 24th, National Public Lands Day, myself, members of the Beartooth Chapter and Bureau of Land Management worked together to install a “John Simmons” gate near the Meeteetse Spires, south of Red Lodge MT. This was a fitting way to celebrate National Public Lands Day and assist the BLM in their management and maintenance of the resources.

Now that fall is here, let's finish our work projects, and enjoy the beauty our National Forests and public lands have to offer.

John Chepulis, Chair
Safety Tips for Horseback Riding During Hunting Season

Riding during hunting season, bow or rifle, can be a dangerous sport and this writer doesn’t recommend it. That being said, if the call of the open trail and the great outdoors is too much for you to resist, here are some safety tips to help keep you and your horse safe.

1) If you will be riding on state land make sure it is legal to ride your horse during hunting season. Many state parks are also state hunting areas; check hours that hunting is allowed and be sure to ride before or after those times, even if riding is allowed!

2) Wear a bright orange hunting vest.

3) Wear a bright colored, preferably orange or yellow, helmet cover.

4) Tie the tail with a brightly colored tail bag, again preferably orange or yellow.

5) Small bells tied to stirrup leathers can help to alert hunters to your presence.

6) Ride in areas that are open; you will be more visible in an open field than in the woods.

7) Let a family member or trusted friend know that you will be riding and be sure to include the location in which you will be riding

8) Be certain to bring a cell phone in case of emergency. This will not stop a hunters bullet or arrow but you should have a cell phone with you any time you ride, in company or alone.

Initial Fees:  
$25 donation to sponsor  
$10 administration cost  
$10 production cost

Renewal donation fees: $25

These beautiful plates would be a nice addition to any vehicle. Please support the sponsoring chapter and get yours today.
Date: July 14, 2012
Registration: 8:00 am to 10:00 am
Place: Gold Creek, MT
(Exit 166 off I-90, follow the signs, 5 ½ miles)

Poker Hands (18 yrs & over)…$5.00 each
50/50 Tickets…………………$1.00 each or 6 for $5.00

Approximately 4 hour Ride. You can ride through a Historic Ghost Town and past a Gold Dredge

BBQ starts at 3:00 pm and drawings for Door Prizes to follow.

Everyone Bring Your Horse or Mule and Have Fun!
FREE Camping Available. Campers are welcome to ride other days to explore on their own!

Absolutely NO Dogs on Ride!
Dogs in Camp must be on leash!

For More Information Please Contact:

Dayna & Charlie Gilman – 846-2464
Pat & Wendy George- 846-3499
Wade and Lonnie Murphy – 431-1717
The Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act
Submitted by; East Slope Back Country Horsemen & R. Fred Fitzpatrick

“It's time to back the Front! Open Houses were scheduled for Helena, Augusta, Choteau and Great Falls on August 11 & 12, 2001. Senator Max Baucus had accepted our invitation and was on hand to listen to folks and their thoughts about the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act!!!”

I was contacted by Gabe Furshong of The Montana Wilderness Association and he asked if Bob Hermance and I would make a comment at the Augusta and Choteau public meetings on the Rocky Mountain Heritage Act. After discussing the matter with Bob, it was decided that we would make comments at the meetings.

On Thursday August 11th Bob and I drove to Augusta to attend the public meeting. We were met there by ESBCH members; Jim and Shirley Brogger along with Greg and Deb Schatz. Senator Baucus was late getting to the meeting as his driver missed the Wolf Creek exit off Interstate 15. Bob and I made the decision that Bob would make comments at the Augusta meeting and I would do it at the Choteau meeting. Because of the late arrival Bob was unable to make it to the microphone and give his comment, but was able to give a copy of the comment to Senator Baucus’s aid.

It was on the way home and discussing the issue of negative comments heard in Augusta, that Bob and I felt that I should address some of the negativism when I made comments in Choteau. So I re-wrote my comments to address some of that. It should also be said that some of these comments did have justified concerns. My feeling is from the years of miss-interpretation to the public by our own land managers, has left a really bitter taste with some of those that made comments.

On Friday August 12th I drove to Bob’s house and we picked up ESBCH member Lisa Schmidt to accompany us to the public meeting in Choteau. When we arrived at Choteau we met ESBCH member Kurt Dyer and his daughter Jorri. Kurt was one of the first to give his comments and he gave a very favorable comment. At least six presenters later, I was able to speak and give comments on the proposal.

We heard a lot of comments in the 2 days of meetings that we attended and there was a good majority that was in favor of the proposal, but it was not without a certain amount of rebuttal. I felt that a lot of the negative comments were very unjust, because a lot of the comments that were made had absolutely no validity. It is my impression that these people did not take the time to look at the proposal and were simply making negative comments.

The meetings were well attended all over and I heard from reliable sources that the meetings in Helena and Great Falls had very few if any negative comments.

Heritage continued on page 7
It is imperative that we make an effort and e-mail Senator Baucus or call his office or write a letter if you are more comfortable doing that, but you need to take the time and submit a comment. So I would encourage you to please do so. Here is some contact information; maxbaucus@earthlink.net, this is Senator Baucus’s personal e-mail that he gave out at the meetings. You can also contact Senator Baucus at http://baucus.senate.gov/?p=contact. This is his official website which has all of his offices and phone numbers listed or stop in at one of the offices and make a personal comment.

After the meetings there was an article published in the Helena Independent Record by an Associated Press writer; “Wilderness advocates are getting far less than they want in order to broker a deal with other interest groups, like public land ranchers and backcountry horseman”\(^1\). So with that remark and numerous e-mails with other members of the Back Country Horsemen of Montana, Montana Wilderness Association and the Wilderness Society, it was decided to submit an op-ed that would hopefully clarify the stance of Back Country Horsemen. With the help of Jared White of the Wilderness Society the following is the op-ed that we drafted. It was published in the Missoulian, Great Falls Tribune and Fairfield Sun-Times at the time of this article.

Heritage Act is a fair shake (OP-ED)

I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again. It doesn’t matter whether you’re a relative newcomer to Montana or 5th generation like myself – when you see that Rocky Mountain Front rising up from the plains to touch the big sky, you can’t help but feel moved.

I felt that way about those mountains most of my life. I started hunting and packing horses back there when I was in high school. Nowadays, I’m kept busy repairing cars, trucks and farm equipment, but I still get back there as often as I can. Mostly it’s to help maintain trails and build bridges with the Backcountry Horsemen. It’s my little way of giving back to a place that has meant so much to me.

This August I had another opportunity to give back to the Front by going to several public meetings attended by Montana’s senior U.S. Senator, Max Baucus. Max came to these meetings wanting to know more about a local proposal called the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act.

On a recent Friday morning in Choteau I took the podium and on behalf of the East Slope Back Country Horsemen told Max that I supported the Heritage Act because it’s a home grown, made in Montana plan, whose time has come.

Our chapter of backcountry horsemen is comprised of members who call the Rocky Mountain Front home. We chose the name East Slope because that is where we recreate; that is where we have spent the majority of our existence helping to maintain the special places that make up Montana’s beloved Rocky Mountain Front. And that is the area that we have grown to love. We have realized, for a long time, without some kind of protection, the Front, as we know it may forever change.

I think Senator Baucus heard a lot of things at these meetings. Most of it was positive and a good reminder that Montanans values common sense and civility. Some of it was critical and good points were made that need to be followed up on. But the most common thing folks in Choteau spoke about was compromise. I heard over and over that folks didn’t get everything they wanted in the Heritage Act but that the process of reaching middle-ground was even more important in the end.

I agree that not everyone got everything they wanted. For instance, contrary to a recent article written by the Associated Press, as a member of the backcountry horsemen I personally would like to see even more wilder-
Backcountry Horsemen have always been a firm supporter of wilderness. In addition to helping our land managers, the stewardship and promotion of wilderness was the reason we were founded in the first place.

Several years ago in its formative stages, the Heritage Act had proposed over 130,000 acres of wilderness. But through some rather hard decisions and tough compromises, that number has been gradually reduced over the years to less than 70,000 acres now.

As a supporter of wilderness it was tough to let some of those areas go, but I am still satisfied with the product today and think the Conservation Management Area can be just as good in some places. What’s still currently proposed as wilderness though represents some of the best country on the Front and will definitely enhance the existing Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex for future generations.

This year there is great expectation that some parts of Montana’s treasured Rocky Mountain Front may take the next big step towards permanent protection. I would hope that Senator Baucus can reward all the hard work and compromise that’s gone into this process and take the Heritage Act to Washington.
The Charlie Russell BCH began the year with some ambitious goals, but as winter wore on into spring, we found ourselves canceling projects due to deep snow, high water, and washed out roads and bridges. Some of the projects were completely cancelled for the year and will probably need extra attention next year. Some were attempted and were only partially successful, and some were postponed until later in the summer when conditions and access were improved. Now fires are burning in many parts of the state and fire danger is high everywhere. I’m sure everyone has similar stories to tell this year about the weather and conditions. However, on the “bright” side, Mother Nature has provided the BCH chapters with job security for the future!

One of our projects that was completed was a joint weed pulling effort in the Pilgrim Creek drainage in the Little Belt Mountains.

The Charlie Russell Back Country Horsemen partnered up with the Belt Creek Ranger District and the Montana Wilderness Association on the third weekend of July for a weed pull in the Pilgrim Creek drainage. Spotted knapweed may not be a big problem in this area but we keep an eye just the same. This weekend MWA members and Forest Service personnel teamed up to clear the trail in from the south entrance for six miles where we set up a camp. From there we pulled knapweed in three locations to keep it from spreading. With 12 people pulling it didn’t take long to clean up an area. By the end of the day we still had enough daylight left to try our luck at fishing. We were pretty successful although we let them all go due to the fact the fish were all West Slope Cutthroat’s. The evening potluck was just the perfect ending to a backcountry campout with everyone having a great time.
Back Country Horsemen of Montana State Convention
March 30-April 1, 2012

“Back Country Horsemen in the 21st Century”

Beartooth Back Country Horsemen will host the 2012 state convention in Billings: Montana’s Trailhead

Billings Hotel & Convention Center
1223 Mullowney Lane

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Convention Co-Chairmen

Sally Carter
839-7839
charles_sally@tctwest.net

Ernie Strum
446-2514
mandestrum@gmail.com
## MONTANA BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN STATE CHAPTERS

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