

Back Country Horsemen of Montana

NEWS

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From the Chairman's



pen

I find it hard to believe the 2000 Convention was two months ago and the long-anticipated horse activities of spring and summer are here. I truly hope most of you are getting a better start than I.

After spending two weeks of February in Georgia and South Carolina, the first two weeks of April on another job out of Dayton, WA and then the first two weeks of May back on jobs near Macon, GA and Charleston, SC, I am ready (mentally) to spend the summer in the mountains on horseback. The truth of the matter is, I haven't seen my mature horses for over a month and may get them hauled home Memorial Day weekend! It doesn't take very many days in the coastal southeast heat and humidity to make Montana seem like our mountain paradise, regardless of how much work has piled up at

home.

Speaking of conventions, it never fails to amaze me how great they are year after year. It doesn't matter whether it is the oldest club (like the Flathead this year), or a relatively new club like the brave souls of the Beartooth for the year 2002, each club's personality shines through, providing an annual event important to all Montana Backcountry Horsemen. We hope everyone is planning on being our guests next March in Missoula.

The "Train the Trainer" program at the Nine Mile Remount Station is just around the corner for representatives from most of our clubs. We all look forward to the information brought back, and anticipate a repeat for a different group of members next year.

Back Country Horsemen of Montana

Mission Statement

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

The Partners

By: W.G. Routen, DVM

Submitted by: Carolyn Eucker, Beartooth BCH

Andy was a cowboy, In his younger days he'd worked the big outfits in Montana, Oregon, Nevada and California before returning home to the family ranch in Montana. There had been some rodeoing interspersed in there, but for the most part he was a ranch cowboy.

Andy's first love was horses and he'd had a lot of them in his lifetime of 70 years. He remembered them all—the good ones and the bad ones. Andy claimed the best horse he ever owned was one he called Jack. He'd bought the weanling colt from a man named Jack and thus the name. Andy thought that this horse was going to be something special, and when he started riding him as a 2-year old, Jack fulfilled his expectations. That spring Andy was 38 years old and in the prime of his life.

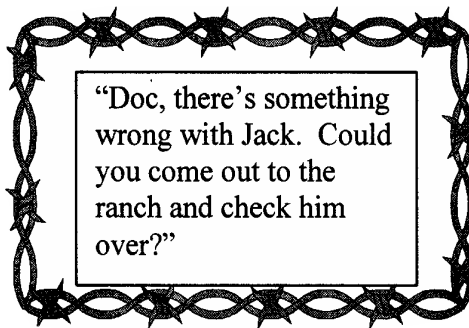
He had plenty of work for Jack on his 400-cow outfit as well as helping the neighbors. The horse proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime horse. He had plenty of fire that was tempered with understanding and a level head. Andy had other horses that he used and was fond of, but Jack became his favorite. As the years went by, it became apparent that there was a special bond between them.

I first met Andy when I came into the country as a veterinarian. Jack was already an old horse, but Andy would still ride him occasionally for an easy job such as trailing cows from one pasture to the next. Andy took exceptional care of all his livestock, and he started using me as his veterinarian. I got to know him and his horses quite well.

Andy called late one afternoon with concern in his voice. "Doc, there's something wrong with Jack. Could you come out to the ranch and check him over?" It was mid-January and the days were short.

It was almost dark as I pulled out of the clinic. It had been a cold, clear day and as the sun went down the temperature rapidly plunged below zero. There was a fresh blanket of snow on the ground and it sparkled in the headlights as I drove out my lane.

When I pulled up to Andy's barn he was waiting for me. "I think he's got the colic, Doc," Andy said. "He wouldn't eat his hay when I fed him tonight and he's lying down now."



I walked into the barn and saw Jack lying flat in a freshly bedded stall. His eyes had a dull look that told me he was in pain. On further exam it was obvious to me that Jack was suffering from impaction colic. After some pain medication and a dose of mineral oil, I left the barn with Jack standing and looking more comfortable.

"Impaction colic is not uncommon in the winter time," I told Andy, "especially in older horses that may not be chewing their feed as well as they used to. Also their water consumption tends to go down when it's cold. I think Jack will come out of this episode just fine, and when he does, we need to float his teeth and change his diet some to make it easier for him to digest his food." Jack did make a full recovery, and with some regular dental work and nutritional changes he managed to stay healthy for several more years. Then the day came I was dreading.

Andy called early one morning and said, "I think it's time to put Jack down." I heard the strain in Andy's voice and told him that I would be right out. When I got to the ranch Andy had the trailer hooked up to the pickup and Jack loaded in it.

"Why don't you follow me in your outfit, Doc," Andy said. "I've got a burial spot out in the hills for him."

"Don't you want me to examine him first, Andy?"

“Nope,” he answered. It’s time. You’ll see.”

I followed Andy on a ranch road until we finally cut across country and ended up in a wide draw. About halfway up the south face of a gently sloping hillside I saw a backhoe and a freshly dug grave. It was a beautiful spot with a panoramic view of the Beartooth Mountains looming above. When Jack came out of the trailer I could tell at a glance that Andy was not premature in his decision. He was stocked up in all four legs and had a plaque of edema along his belly extending back to his sheath. It was an effort for him to move and I could see his jugular vein pulsing rapidly. I pulled out my stethoscope and listened to his heart. Jack was in congestive heart failure.

“When did he first start failing?” I asked Andy.

“About 3 days ago,” Andy said. “He first started swelling in the legs and losing his appetite. He didn’t want to move much. I knew the time was close and figured he’d just lie down and die quietly. I dug the grave yesterday. Then this morning I could see he was a lot worse and I couldn’t stand seeing him die a slow death.”

“Well, you’re right,” I said. “He needs to be put down. There are medications we can use to treat congestive heart failure, but in an animal this size it can be very expensive, and how much longer can we expect to keep a 34 year old horse alive?”

I really didn’t need to say any more. Andy had already come to his own conclusion. He didn’t care about what medical condition was responsible for his horse dying. He just knew he was old and it was his time to go.

Euthanasia is one of the hardest jobs that I have to do. In my 22 years of practice it has become more difficult rather than easier. As I was drawing up the injection of sodium pentobarbital that would put Jack to sleep forever, I began reciting in my mind the Veterinarian’s Oath: “Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal

health, the relief of animal suffering....” Suddenly, Andy’s voice broke in on my thoughts. “Let me spend just a minute or two alone with him before you give him the shot.”

“That’s fine, Andy,” I said. “You signal me when you’re ready.”

As I watched from a distance Andy was stroking Jack on the neck and talking softly to him. Even though Jack was feeling terrible, I could see him respond to Andy’s voice and touch. A moment later Andy waved me over. I quickly inserted the needle into Jack’s jugular vein and began to administer the solution. Andy’s last words to Jack as he stroked his face were, “goodbye partner.” Then Jack collapsed to the ground and was gone. I looked at Andy and saw that his face was wet with tears. I thought of the bond between them. All those years as partners working cattle, the summer-time pack trips into the mountain back country, the fall hunting trips, and even in Jack’s “retirement” years, the love and care that Andy gave to Jack because of their bond. They were truly partners. I became misty-eyed, too. I patted Andy on the shoulder and walked to my truck. I would leave him alone to bury Jack.

On the way back to the clinic I reflected on how strong the human-animal bond can be. I’ve experienced it personally with my own animals, and I see it daily in my profession. The fact that we are able to perform euthanasia in the veterinary profession is a blessing for our animal friends, but it can be very heart wrenching when a bond is broken. The number of times I’ve had to perform the task is more than I can count—and no, it never gets any easier to witness the loss of a partner.



Preview 2000

by: Peggy Conlin, President
Charlie Russell BCH

submitted by: Homer Shanholtz

The agenda for the new year is gradually being assembled. We have taken the information from the survey results provided by the membership and scheduled seven events starting with the Sun River Game Range ride on May 15. This ride is an excellent opportunity to work with your horses and put refining touches on your favorite steed. The Windy Mountain ride five days later (May 20, 21) also provides a scenic view as well as an opportunity to introduce a new horse to the mountains. If you like beautiful scenery, good food and a glimpse of some of Montana's finest wildlife, you will not want to miss the ride at Gibson Dam over the Memorial Day weekend. The last time we rode this area, a bear and her cub ran up the trail ahead of us. By the way, hunting season is still open for bears and of course there is good fishing. Indian

Meadows (June 10, 11) continues to be favorite for many back country riders. There are opportunities for as long or as short of a ride as you wish but we may not have a guide for the shorter rides unless someone volunteers to assist in this area. On the Continental Divide Trail (June 24, 25), you can go as far or as short as you want. On July 28, 29, and 30, Homer Shanholtz will lead a group to the Chinese Wall in the Bob Marshal Wilderness. On August 11, 12, 13, Denny Pilling will take a group to the West Fork of the Teton. The Chinese Wall and the West Fork of the Teton will involve camping overnight for two nights. Therefore, you will need supplies for two nights and three days on these trips. If you do not have a pack horse, please let us know so that we can make arrangements for your gear.

The dates have not been established, but Bill Austin will probably provide the leadership for St. Jude's. However, this has not been cleared with Bill as yet. Eagle Mount is also still pending.

There is also pending a work project with Al Henry of the Montana Conservation Corp. The place and date cannot be established as yet but the CRBCH will be packing in tools and equipment for the boys doing the hard labor. This sounds like a deal made in heaven. We will be planking the top part of a bridge on Trail 481 about 45 minutes from our campsite at Indian Meadows on June 10th. The ride on the Continental Divide Trail will also consist of clearing the trail from Roger as well as the Fletcher Pass side. Garland Crowell has been clearing the Windy Mountain Trail early in May and there will probably be little trail work to do on the Windy Mountain ride of May 20 and 21st. I am excited about the events of this coming year and I hope you will be able to participate in many of these activities.

The Decker Pack Saddle—Origin and Development

by Ray Stofel

submitted by: Marvin Trask, Mission Valley BCH

This article contains excerpts from the book "The Lochsa Story—Land Ethics in the Bitterroot Mountains", written by Mr. Bud Moore, published by Mountain press, Missoula, MT about the Lochsa of Idaho.

E.H. Harriman of the Union Pacific (Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company) and James J. Hill of the Northern Pacific had long fought to gain power for themselves and advantage for their companies. The shortcut through the Lochsa looked to Harriman like a good place to build a railroad. When he set out to do that, Hill counterattacked, and the war was on again. By 1908 they were locked in a contest to complete surveys up the Clearwater and the Lochsa over Lolo Pass, and down the Lolo Fork to connect with the railroad in the Bitterroot Valley. The company to finish first would gain control of key locations along the way. Neither the bears, the trappers, the prospectors, nor the rangers had ever seen the likes of the activity that went on in the land of the Lochsa during that war of transits.

In order to follow grades negotiable by locomotives, both companies confined their surveys to the bottom of the trailless Lochsa canyon. The Oregon Railroad and Navigation company supplies their camps by pack train, but the Northern Pacific sought to gain advantage by hauling supplies up the Lochasa by boat. Ten or twelve men towed each boat while one man held the craft out in the current by use of a long pole. After swamping its boats in a big rapid where the Black Canyon confines the Lochsa River between steep cliffs, the North

(See "Saddle" on page 5)

("Saddle" continued from page 4)

ern Pacific quit this strategy, and it too began hauling its camps in by pack trains.

Both companies launched survey parties east from Kooskia, Idaho, and west from Hot Springs, MT. The hired packers and pack stock where ever they could find them until at least one hundred pack animals worked on the Idaho side alone. Trails were needed for the loaded pack trains to get into the river bottom camps. So the companies assigned crews to clear out the game and Indian trails leading down the ridges from the Lolo Trail into the Lochsa's canyon. The packers led their loaded pack trains from Pete King on the Lochsa, up the long ridge followed by Ranger Smith in 1909 to the Lolo Trail and then down low standard trails to campsites on the river far below. Working from the east, the Northern Pacific crews built a good trail from the mouth of the Brushy Fork down the south side of the Crooked Fork, then along the north side of the Lochsa River. Wherever possible they built the trail close to the river, but at each canyon narrows—and they were many—their route climbed above the bluffs to circumvent the obstacle, and then descended again to the river.

When either company built a trail, it tried to prevent its rival's use of it. After bridging a stream, the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company would station a guard to keep the pack trains of the Northern Pacific from crossing. So the Northern Pacific crews built their own bridges. There, deep in the Lochsa's wilds, pack trains crossed parallel bridges much like the big engines ran on parallel tracks in the valleys outside the mountains.

While the competition was mutual, the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company was especially ornery. It hired a man with a pack horse whose main job was to linger on narrow stretches of trail and slow down the Northern Pacific Company's pack trains or stop them altogether at places where they couldn't pass each other. Dean Harrington of Kooskia, Idaho, and Forest Service guard George Trenary once accompanied a Northern Pacific pack train over the narrow trail along the Lochsa River. At one place Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company crews had built a trail around a sheer ledge by drilling holes in the cliff, leaving their drill steel sticking out of the holes, and then placing logs on the protruding steel to form a trail. Harrington, Trenary, the packer, and his loaded train made it across that precarious shelf, but the makeshift trail had been dynamited into the river before their return trip. They found the man who had done the blasting nearby, and Trenary arrested him. They called him "Johnny Behind the Rock."

The competing surveys created boom times in Kooskia, Lolo Hot Springs, and the town of Lolo near where Lewis and Clark camped in the land of the stone-faced woman. Many pack trains and saddle horses crossed Lolo Pass all winter long in 1908-9, and they packed a road through snow that at times was twelve feet deep. (When an animal stepped off the packed track it would founder in soft snow until the packers could get him onto the road again.) The Northern Pacific built bunkhouses, barns, and a hospital at Lolo Hot Springs, and in 1908 the company extended a wagon road along the Lolo trail to within two miles of Lolo Pass where it constructed a log warehouse and camp buildings. Northern Pacific pack trains heading into the Lochsa country used that outpost as a jumping-off point.

To demonstrate its will to beat Harriman, the Northern Pacific in 1909 began building grade west from the Bitterroot spur line. Cochran, Winters, and Smith had the construction contract, and it subcontracted sections of the job along the Lolo fork. Four-horse teams pulled rattling wagons hauling grub to the camps as well as hay and grain for the hundreds of horses and mules used to scrap the dirt out of the cuts and tunnels and into the fills across the creek bottoms. As Vic Miller, then a young man growing up in the town of Lolo, described the robust situation: "J....!There was some activity here then."

.....*To be continued in the next newsletter*

Protecting the "hush of the land"

At a Wilderness hearing in Washington, D.C. in 1969, Tom Edwards, a Montana school teacher and outfitter, spoke for the "hush of the land."

Into this land of spiritual strength I have been privileged to guide on horseback literally thousands of people — the old, many past 70, the young, the poor, the rich, the great and little people like myself. I have harvested a self-sustaining natural resource of the forest of vast importance. Not one word will suffice to explain this resource, but let us call it the "hush of the land." This hush is infinitely more valuable to me than money or my business. The Forest Service proposed roads in fragile land may satisfy the clamor of the masses, but the "hush of the land" the masses really seek will be crushed forever.

.....And what are these people buying? Is it fishing and hunting? Not for the most part. I would have gone broke years ago if this had been the case. As I said before, most come to this country to buy the "hush of the land"

Will your horses go hungry tonight?

By Allen Rowley, Resource Assistant, Spotted Bear Ranger District
Provided to BBCH by Tom Highberger
Submitted by: Carolyn Eucker, Beartooth BCH

What follows is a three-part series concerning the grazing of pack and saddle stock in the wilderness. The first two parts will be published in this issue and the final part will appear in the Summer 2000 issue. This series moves beyond the use of pickets, hobbles, and high-lines. Instead it focuses on the availability of forage, range condition and utilization of the existing forage. The specific examples used here are from the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, but the principles apply throughout the twist. This is a different twist to looking at Wilderness grazing, but a very important one.

PART 1

After all day on the trail have you ever pulled into a likely campsite and asked yourself if your horses will go hungry tonight? Most of you do answer this question, since abundant forage is a critical part of a good camp. Through experience, some people can make this determination with a quick glance around. But how do you know for sure if there will be enough feed for your horses? What impact will your grazing have on this campsite? Over the next three issues we will talk about avoiding hungry horses and end with two tools you can use to answer the question for yourself.

This question is really best answered in three separate steps to be covered in this 3-part series:

- First, how much forage does your stock need to eat?
- What is the condition or health of the site where I want to graze my stock? This provides the answer to how much forage the site will produce.
- How much of the forage that is present should be consumed?

How Much Forage Does Your Stock Need to Eat?

This is the easy question. Animal science researchers have measured the daily feed intake requirements of horses and mules for years. These frequently-cited figures range from 22 to 30 pounds dry weight or daily feed intake, depending on animal size. The most commonly used figure is 26 pounds dry weight for a 1,000 pound horse each day. Poor quality or high quality makes little difference. A horse will still consume about 26 pounds dry weight of feed a day. Healthy, idle horses can maintain themselves on 26 pounds of good grass hay, or the equivalent in fresh grass per day. A horse being worked hard will also eat approximately 26 pounds of feed a day; but to stay in shape a larger percentage of this will need to be high protein supplements like pellets.

To take in the required amount of forage, horses need 5 to 12 hours of free grazing. In a lush, irrigated pasture some horses may only need 4 hours to graze the needed 26 pounds of forage. However, in drier or poor range conditions, a horse will need the full 5 to 12 hours of grazing to meet their forage requirement. On the average, 6 hours is what Wilderness travelers should plan for grazing their animals. Less time than this and there is the change the horses will not find enough forage. The need for 6 hours of grazing is good news for most of us since on a Wilderness pack trip your horses and mules will seldom have 12 hours free for grazing. More likely between time on the trail and on the high line at night so they don't run off, there are only 3 to 6 hours available for grazing.

If you do not have 6 hours to allow free grazing, then supplemental feed should be supplied. In planning how much extra forage may be required, consider the following table. Remember, this table is only a guideline and results with your stock may be different.

Hours of Grazing	Additional Feed Needed
0 hours	26 pounds
1 hour	21.5 pounds
2 hours	17.5 pounds
3 hours	13 pounds
4 hours	9 pounds
5 hours	4.5 pounds
6 hours	0 pounds

Based on this guide, if you can only allow 3 hours of free grazing a day, you should plan on packing in 13 pounds of feed per day per animal.

So the answer to how much feed your horses need is: each 1,000 pound horse or mule will need, on average, 26 pounds dry weight of feed per day. Under free grazing, it will take your horse from 5 to 12 hours a day together this much forage. On the average, you should plan to allow your stock to graze 6 hours daily or plan on packing in supplemental forage.

Part II

What is the range condition or health of your grazing area?

Determining range condition can be complicated, but it is a critical tool for management because range condition has a strong control over how much forage a site may produce.

Range condition or health is measured by comparing the ideal amount of naturally occurring vegetation against what is actually on the site. Sites with the greatest amount of the ideal vegetation are in the best condition, rated as excellent. The ideal naturally occurring vegetation is determined by the soils, elevation, precipitation amounts and a number of other variables. These same factors also influence the productivity of the site.

Comparing the existing vegetation with the ideal vegetation has a real practical value for range management. On bunchgrass ranges the naturally occur-

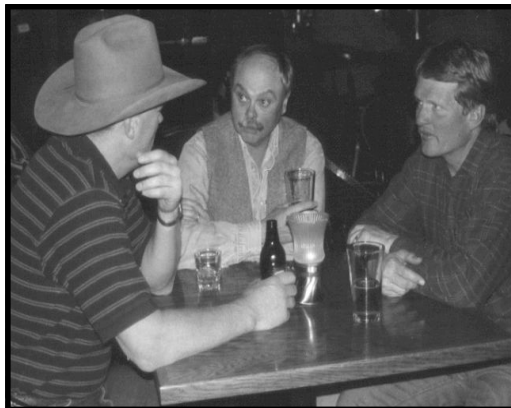
ring vegetation is the very vegetation that horses, mules and wildlife desire, seek out and graze first. This is also the grass species that provides the most nutrition for grazing animals. Therefore, managing for good to excellent range condition is advantageous as it provides the most productive and nutritional forage.

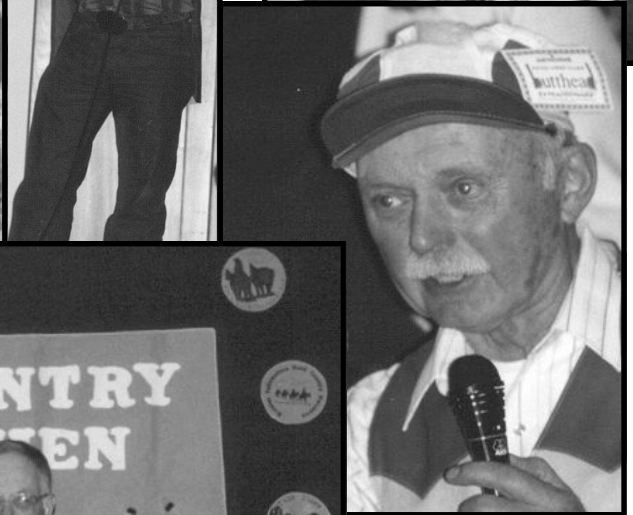
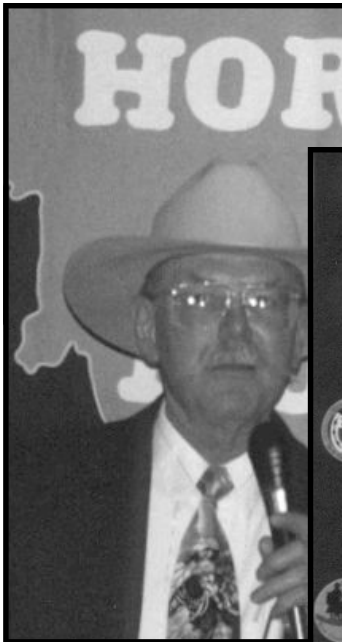
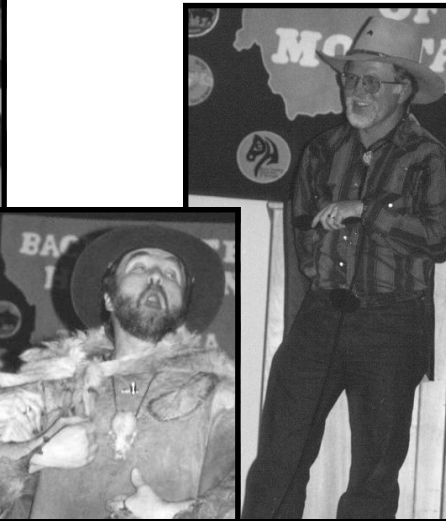
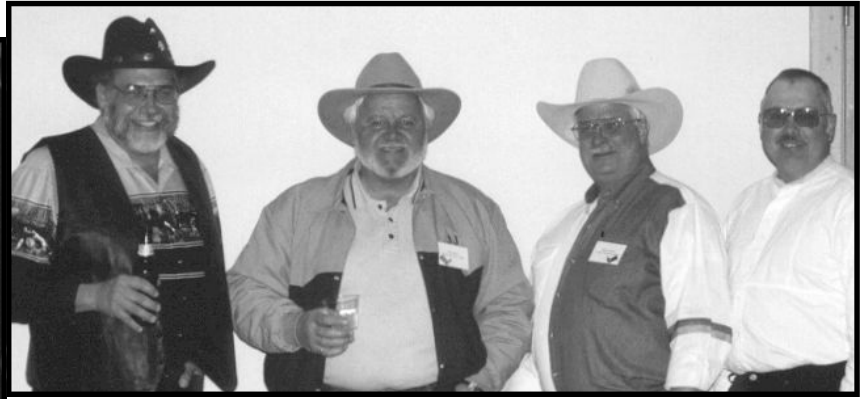
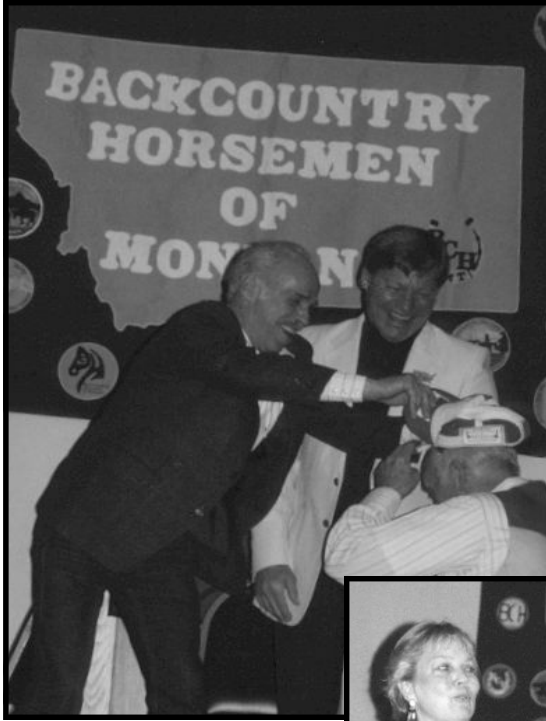
In the Bob Marshall and surrounding Wilderness areas there are three premier grass species sought out by all grazing animals: Idaho fescue, blue-bunch wheat grass, and rough fescue. These three grass species rank highest in productivity, palatability, and nutritional value for both pack stock and wildlife species.

The downside of these grasses is they are known as decreasers, meaning they are so desirable that they are sought out and grazed again and again until, if unchecked, they may be reduced in numbers. Continual season-long grazing with no chance for the grass plants to re-grow and build up an energy store in the roots will kill the plants over time. In our part of the country the re-growth happens typically in May through July when the soils are moist. At least one out of every three years grass plants should not be grazed during this re-growth period. The various rest rotation and deferred rotation grazing systems are based on this principle of providing some rest, thus allowing re-growth during the summer.

In a wilderness setting you can see how a problem could develop. A party with horses and mules arrives at a campsite in mid June. There is plenty of grass so they free graze all of their stock and use very little supplemental feed. This group moves on the next day, but next week another party does the same thing. This continues all summer long, at this popular campsite week after week. The grass never gets the chance to completely re-grow and build up an energy store. This is exactly the situation that is happening in the most popular areas of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, for example the area from Meadow Creek to Salmon Forks on the South Fork of the Flathead.

2000 Convention Photo Album





The following table shows the correlation of range condition to the amount of forage available. This information is taken from range surveys done in 1993. There is variation from site to site, but the chart does paint a clear picture of some poor condition range sites in popular areas, and how low their production is compared to a site in good or excellent condition.

Location	Condition	Production (dry weight grass)
Danaher Meadows	Good-Excellent	1100 lbs/ acre
Babcock Creek	Good	700 lbs/ acre
Bartlett Meadow	Good	420 lbs/ acre
Spring Creek in the Danaher Meadows	Fair	870 lbs/ acre
Murphy Flats	Fair	400 lbs/ acre
Hodag Flats	Fair	250 lbs/ acre
Big Slide in	Poor-Fair	220 lbs

As a rule of thumb, bunchgrass range sites in good to excellent condition produce 600 to 1,000 pounds of grass per acre. The production on sites in poor or fair condition is dramatically below this level. The above chart is not a complete sample of all the areas in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, but note the number of sites in poor to fair condition along the popular South Fork corridor.

Now we have some understanding of range condition, what it is, and how important it is, what can we do with the information? Two options are available. One, when camping in popular corridors, use Supplemental forage as much as possible. You will be doing your part to allow the grass the needed rest. The Spotted Bear Ranger District is so concerned about this that we are planning to feed 100% supplemental forage for all government animals at the Black Bear Administrative site. One commercial outfitter is planning to feed 100% hay in the black bear vicinity. The second action for a Wilderness traveler to take would be to simply avoid areas in poor range condition and camp somewhere else. Simply avoid areas in poor range condition and camp somewhere else.

Be sure to look for part III of this series in the Summer 2000 edition of BCH of Montana "NEWS."

Paradise crossed!

This is a true story of the Swan Valley, written by Greg Tollefson, free lance writer for "The Missoulian"

It was not too long ago that the huge hunk of real estate we call Montana was relatively unmarked by the hand of man. It was a wild country then, where the only roads were the dusty travois tracks left by Native Americans as they moved across the land following the buffalo and the seasons.

Scarcely a blink on the eye of geologic time later, we have criss-crossed this state with almost 100,000 miles of roads, federal, state, local and private. With the coming of those roads, the face of the land has changed and the vast wilderness has receded.

For those of us who have been fortunate enough to spend our lives in this place, the changes resulting from the expansion and improvement of the road network have been dramatic. And for some among us, those changes have brought with them a great sadness. Take the Swan Valley for example.

My 1933 map of the Flathead National Forest shows what is called a "good motor road" following section lines most of the way from Bigfork to the northern end of Swan Lake. From there, it becomes a winding path marked by parallel dashes all the way to Seeley Lake. The map legend indicates that those dashes represent a "poor motor road." Over the entire length of the Swan Valley, only a few tracks branch from the main route, none venturing more than a mile or two from the river bottom.

When I came along, 14 years later, my parents used that same road when they hauled me and my siblings up to the family cabin at Swan Lake. It was a long, dusty drive.

In those days, it wasn't far from that road to virgin, wild territory. The lower Swan Valley had seen decades of logging activity already, but it was limited to timber that could be wrestled or floated to the lake shore where it could be rafted up, moved to the lower end of the lake, then hauled to mills. A mile or two back from the lake and the river corridor, the country was just as it had been when Flathead Indians were pretty much the only visitors.

We never had to go far to satisfy youthful cravings for adventure. The wilderness was just over there, across the road, where the forest began, and it continued for miles. Our explorations took us from the river bottom to the crests of both sheltering mountain ranges. For us kids, it was an embarrassment of riches. The place seemed to be teeming with bear, deer, elk, mountain goats and, of course, trout. Over the long months of winter the Swan Valley was the source of countless hours of scheming, planning and idyllic day-dreams as we impatiently waited for our summer return.

Then one year, around 1959 or 1960, we found that the old, rutted and serpentine road had been replaced by what is now State Highway 83. It coursed straight as an arrow up the valley bottom, carving a tunnel through miles of towering timber, and transforming a day long adventure into a two-hour drive.

But the road did more than that. It opened up a valley that had previously been inhabited by only a handful of hardy souls. Summer homes were built. Businesses were established. And spreading out like tentacles

(see "Paradise" on page 12)

("Paradise" continued from page 11)

From the blacktop, more roads appeared, reaching out across the valley floor and up the sides of the Sway and Mission ranges. Those roads provided access to the rich old-growth timber resource that the valley harbored.

Today, those roads claw up the steep slopes of the valley all along the route. On the west side, they run nearly to the boundary of the Mission Mountain Wilderness in many places. On the east side, some of those roads snake almost all the way up into the “goat rocks.”

In my youth, I think that most people sort of had a notion that there would always be plenty of wild country. A road her, a road there. Log this pristine drainage, log that one. But every time you build one of those roads, the wilderness gets pushed back just that much more. And pretty soon, we were all looking at a place that had changed more than we expected.

Wildlife habitat had been altered and fragmented. Security areas and travel corridors had been removed and cut off. Spawning areas had been silted in or rendered inaccessible because of poorly placed culverts. “Road hunting” became a favorite fall activity in the Swan. And conflicts between wildlife use and human use had increased dramatically.

Today, that valley is not the same place that enriched me so as a kid. And that is only one valley. Similar changes have occurred all across the mountain country of Montana. Much of what was so recently wild, much of what has taught us, challenged us, and sustained us over the years is no more. And of course, we cannot replace the wild country that we have lost.

That is not to say, however, that all hope is gone. There is still a substantial amount of wild land out there, unprotected by wilderness or other designation. And right now, we have the opportunity to determine if those wild lands that are left are worth keeping that way.

That’s why it is so important for people who are concerned about the fate of our remaining roadless lands to participate and be heard in the discussion of the U.S. Forest Service’s roadless area conservation proposal.

As proposed, the plan would prevent further road construction on about 5.8 million acres of inventoried roadless lands in Montana. Most decision regarding management of these lands would still be in the hands of local resource managers, but the idea would be to manage those forests for the natural values that roadlessness makes possible.

For some, the proposal may go too far, and for others, it does not do enough to protect what we have left. For my money, it is a long overdue and very big step in the right direction. Regardless of your opinion, you should take the opportunity to make it known during the series of public meetings that will be held on the proposal.

For more information go to www.wildmontana.org/keepitwild.htm.

“ONCE MONTANA WILD LANDS ARE GONE — THERE GONE FOREVER”

About your newsletter!

Back Country Horsemen of Montana News is published three times a year by BCH of MT, PO box 5431, Helena, MT 59604-5431.

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 Kravetz, 643 Howard Ave., Billings, MT 59101. Phone: (406)896-1921 e-mail: lbk@mcn.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 20** Absaroka, Beartooth, Bitterroot, Cabinet & CMR
- September 10** East Slope, Flathead, Gallatin, Greater Yellowstone & Last Chance.
- January 10** Mile High, Mission Valley, Missoula, Three Rivers & Upper Clark Fork

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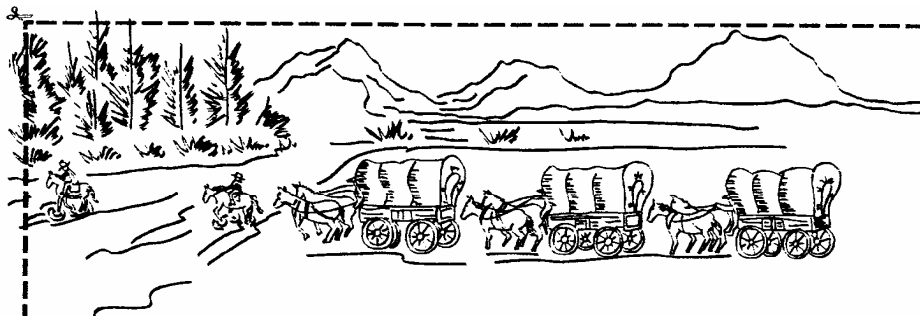
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NAME: _____ **PHONE NUMBER:** _____

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Please complete this form and mail to Linda Kravetz, 643 Howard Ave., Billings, MT 59101

BCH of Montana Director's Meeting Highlights/March 2000

Committees:

Issues:

Kurt Dyer will remain as chairman with Smoke Elser and Jim Brogger as committee members. The committee had nothing new to report.

Membership:

Dave Crawford and Chuck Miller with Ken Ausk assisting. Ken reported he has never had a club come to him requesting help in maintaining membership despite his efforts to suggest this.

Education:

Loretta Watkins and Mary Beth Alkire make up this committee. Loretta has had several request for lists of speakers for clubs. One suggestion was to contact the local extension agent.

Newsletter:

Linda Kravetz remains as the Editor. The assistance of clubs submitting articles has helped tremendously in newsletter production.

Expansion:

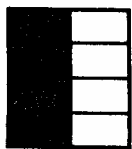
Bob Facklam is the chairman. Bob reported contact with people in Lewistown that may be coming together to form a chapter. Bob encourages chapters to send representatives to prospective groups in their area that may be interested in forming a chapter.

Training:

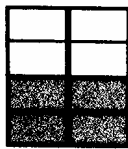
Ken Ausk, Merlyn Huso, and Chuck Miller form this committee. This committee will facilitate continuation of our "Train the Trainer" sessions in upcoming years if this is successful.

"Back Country Horsemen of Montana News"

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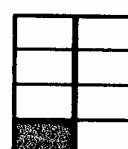
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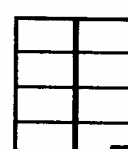
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Quarter page	\$ 70.00	\$ 65.00	\$ 55.00
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For advertising information and submission contact: Your local chapter or Linda Kravetz, Editor, (406)896-1921

The views and opinions expressed in the authored articles may not necessarily be those of Back Country Horsemen of Montana.

(see "Chairman's Pen" on page 15)
 ("Chairman's pen" continued from page 1)

After several years of hoping to have an educational and fun weekend event at our old homestead in the Rock Creek drainage, Nancy and I have finally scheduled it for July 7-9th. We will have hands-on packing, horse handling and containment, as well as numerous fun activities -- no phone, power, and direct access to some backcountry trails. We're hoping to have a good turnout from our club members and share in the expertise of our participant in the trainer program, Dan Harper, our education chairman.

Meetings regarding the Forest Service Roadless Plan are close at hand for members in all areas, if they have not already been held. Several are scheduled in each area. (The schedule can be found on the Internet, www.roadless.fs.fed.us, or should be in your local newspaper.) It is absolutely necessary that nearly all members get involved in this process, regardless of your feelings about the political motivations that initiated it. There is a good probability that this is the beginning of a long process, which will determine the classification and protection level of all of our remaining roadless areas. We must not let down the possibilities for future generations of Backcountry Horsemen.

One last item in which I would especially like all members to become involved is the control of noxious weeds. Noxious weed spread is by far the greatest threat to our natural resources, and

Coyote Coulee trail dedication

By: Debbie Barcus
 Bitterroot BCH

On Saturday, April 29, 2000 at 2:00 p.m. there was a dedication of the Coyote Coulee trail system. Forest Service Officials, Dan Ritter and Craig Bobzien dedicated this newest addition to the trail system in memory of the late Belle McGregor, who was instrumental in creating the trail network along the Bitterroot BCH and the Bitterroot National Forest. Belle

demands every outdoor person's attention. Learn to identify them; control and eradicate them on your own land; inform others; and while out riding, if you find a patch that the owner or management agency may not be aware of, mark the location and inform the appropriate persons.

Have a great summer riding your horses whenever possible and be inspired by our beautiful land and the fact that millions of people love being in the coastal southeast. May this always be so!

McGregor was born in the Big Hole and moved to the valley when she was five years old. She started riding forest trails at nine years of age and continued to be an active outdoors woman till her death in 1994.

The coyote Coulee trail system is the result of almost ten years of volunteer labor primarily by the Bitterroot BCH. Belle was a long time BCH member and she was one of the original scouts for the trail location. She enlisted the support of other BCH members and convinced the Forest Service that a low elevation horseback and hiking trail would meet the demands of a growing population in the Bitterroot Valley. Former Darby District Ranger Tom Wagner also became interested in the possibility of an official trail along with the BCH members. He spent many hours working with the group. After Belle's death BCH member Jeanine Nelson became the Chairman of the Coyote Coulee project and worked with Tom Wagner. When Tom left, Dan Ritter continued working with Jeanine and other BCH members for the next six years to finish the project.

The trail is very popular because it provides the novice rider (both horse and bicycle) and hiker with a relatively easy trail that is close to Highway 93 and accessible most of the year. Last fall the final phase of the trail was completed with the addition of a trailhead facility near the junction of Lost Horse and Hayes Creek roads.

Coyote Coulee is a low elevation, non-motorized trail that follows the foothills and drops into a couple of creeks on its path past fruit orchards and a crumbling homestead. The trail is located in an area rich with history of the early fruit orchard settlement and is an area that provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.

The Coyote Coulee Trail system consists of two loop trails, totaling eight miles and is located between Hamilton and Darby west of Highway 93. The trailhead is located near the intersection of Forest Road #496 and Lost Horse Road about two miles west of Highway 93. He trail is open to non-motorized uses such as hiking, horseback riding, and bicycling.

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