

A tri-annual newsletter of the Back County Horsemen of Oregon

Winter 2014

Oregon's Wilderness Trails Are Disappearing

Submitted by: By Phil Hufstader Oregon's National Director sent this article in to the National Newsletter



Oregon's wilderness trails have taken a major hit in the last three years. High winds, major snow pack in the high country, and back to back extreme fire seasons, combined with the lack of funding for USFS trail crews, has left the trail system in a mess.

BCHO members have tripled their volunteer efforts to just try to open the main arteries on several wilderness trails across Oregon. The lack of almost zero trail crew funds, and extreme fire seasons, has drawn away any trail crews that do exist to fight fire instead of doing trail maintenance. BCHO stepped up to the plate and intensified their efforts by forming cutting crews, followed by a second crew of riders that swamped out all cut out chunks and any other material from the trail. One major main access trail that was blocked by winter storms in one wilderness took ten days just to cut the trail open up to the PCT. In one portion alone of that trail for a 1/4 of a mile, 100 trees had to be cut, and

over 10% were over four foot or larger in diameter. Three weeks later another storm blocked the same trail system and the BCHO volunteers from the High Country Wilderness Packers chapter responded to get the system open again. Several trail crews led by BCHO top sawyers fanned out over several different wilderness areas across the state and started opening trails that have been blocked for several years, and remind you this was BCHO volunteers not any agency people involved, using their own equipment. Reports started coming in from the different groups, to the state BCHO president, of trees too large for the size of cross cuts being used. Several ten foot crosscut saws were pulled out of the barn rafters, sharpened and deployed to the crews. Now as a BCHA member you might be asking what the problem is, but I can only think of two other states, Washington and California, that even phantom our problem. Five to eight foot diameter trees, and in a jackpot, you can come across over twenty on top of each other as the photos I've submitted show.



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The BCHO State Officers

President Jerry Bentz president@bcho.org

Vice President East Carole Hopkins vicepresident@bcho.org

Vice President West Phil Hufstader vicepresident@bcho.org

Membership See your local chapter

Legislative/Public Lands Director Becky Wolf pld@bcho.org

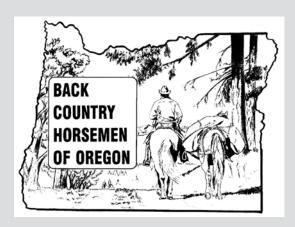
Education/LNT Director Becky Wolf education@bcho.org

Newsletter Articles Sara Lagasse newsletter@bcho.org

Newsletter Advertising Chris Worden advertising@bcho.org

Newsletter Editor Shelly Williams newsletter@bcho.org

Please feel free to contact our officers or staff if you need any assistance or have a question pertaining to Back Country Horsemen of Oregon.



Come to a meeting and make a difference...

Columbia Gorge Chapter

Meets: The 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Hood River Saddle Club, 4384 Belmont Dr Hood River OR 97031

Meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. Please confirm meeting with contact.

Contact: Joy Senger at columbiagorge@bcho.org

East Cascades Chapter

Meets: The 2nd Monday of every month at the Black Bear Diner, 1465 NE 3rd St., Bend OR meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. Contact: Pat Marquis, eastcascades@bcho.com

Emerald Empire Chapter

Meets: the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the Utility District building, 33733 Seavey Lp Road, Eugene, OR 97405 at 7:00 p.m.

Contact: Emily Elias, emeraldempire@bcho.org

High Desert Trail Riders Chapter

Meets: The 2nd Tuesday of each month at Sizzler Restaurant, 2506 S. 6th Street, Klamath Falls, OR at 7:00 p.m.

Contact: Carole Hopkins, Lodgelady60@hotmail.com

North Umpqua Chapter

Meets: The 3rd Thursday of the month at the Douglas County Courthouse, 1020 Oakley Road, Roseburg, OR 97471 in Room #317 at 7:00 p.m.

Contact: Janet Miller, northumpqua@bcho.org

Sourdough Chapter

Meets: The third Saturday of the month at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 150 Lewis Court, Cave Junction.

6:00 p.m. in the winter and at 7:00 p.m. in the summer

Contact: Dick Butler, sourdough@bcho.org

Steens Chapter

Meets: The 3rd Wednesday of every month at El Toreo Restaurant, 239 N Broadway, Burns, OR Please confirm meeting with contact. Contact: Leon Pielstick leonandsusan@centurytel.net

Meets: The 1st Wednesday of each month at Elmer's Restaurant, 3950 Market Street NE, Salem, OR. Dinner time is at 6:00 p.m. meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Contact: Jennifer Paulson, westcascades-pres@bcho.org

Territorial Riders Chapter

West Cascades Chapter

Meets: The 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Beavercreek Fire Department, 22310 S Beavercreek Rd. Beavercreek, Or. 97004 at 7:00 n m

Contact: Tim Lagasse, territorialriders@bcho.org

Cover Story Continued...

Oregon has developed, and is practicing, several new variations in trail clearing practices. Several of the Wilderness areas are being used by the mountain bikers in our state, so in order to slow them down we are leaving any tree across the trail that a horse or mule can easily step across, and spending the most effort on the bigger trees, to get the trails back open to the equestrians and hikers. BCHO trail crew volunteers estimate that 65% of Oregon's wilderness trails are in major disrepair or just plain closed off to equestrian access. Several states are in the same boat as Oregon, and we need to be pushing the USFS Regional Foresters of our areas to implement the Minimum Tool Assessment. Speaking from Oregon, our volunteer members are not getting any younger and working weekend after weekend is taking a toll on our members doing a job that the USFS should be doing.

In The Beginning

Submitted by: Sara Lagasse

The formation of BCH took place in Montana's Flathead Valley in accepted into the BCHA at the National Board Meeting held in January of 1973. Since then, our progress is a matter of record, of which we are very proud. Early growth of the Back Country Horsemen organization continued with additional chapters in Montana. In 1979, these chapters and one from Salmon, Idaho, formed the Back Country Horsemen of America. Three more Montana chapters and one from Idaho were added in the next Five purposes unite Back Country Horsemen chapters and few years.

Back Country Horsemen of Washington was incorporated in 1977 and developed an informal liaison with the Montana and Idaho Back Country Horsemen. In 1981, a California organization known as the High Sierra Stock Users was formed. After several years of discussion, the four groups decided to merge using the Back Country Horsemen of America name. A Constitution was drafted in 1985 and adopted in 1986. It provided that the governing body of this new organization would be a Board of Directors elected from each state. Montana, Idaho, California and Washington Back Country Horsemen units became the BCHA. Since that time, there has been steady growth within the four founding state organizations and in other states.

In May of 1996 a group of affiliate members of Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) and other interested horsemen (including our very own HDTRBCH chapter) met in Hood River, Oregon with the purpose of forming a Back Country Horsemen organization in the state of Oregon. Application was made to BCHA, and in April 1997 Back Country Horsemen of Oregon (BCHO) was created with four member chapters. BCHO was Plain, Washington, on April 25, 1997. That first year the fledgling Back Country Horsemen of Oregon organization racked up 3,620 man-hours, 168 days of stock use and 11,296 miles of stock hauling working on volunteer projects on public land.

members across the country. The five purposes of BCH define our common goals as Back Country Horsemen members.

The five purposes are...

- 1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness.
- 2. To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
- 3. To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
- 4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
- 5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state Back Country Horsemen's organizations.

For more information on our history and the founders please visit http://www.bcho.org/wp/about-bcho/history-of-bcho/





A Letter from the President

Submitted by: Jerry Bentz

Greetings,

I hope everyone had a great summer. I was fortunate enough to get to spent a week and a half in the Bob Marshal with some of my good friends from High Desert Trail Riders. It was a great trip. I understand that the rest of you made great trips and participated in a lot of work parties. I look forward to visiting with everyone at Winter Convention and sharing stories of our exploits.

This year's Winter Convention is February 27 - 29 at the Bend Shiloh Inn. There are quite a few positions up for election including President. The Nominating Committee is actively searching for members to fill positions. We already have several speakers lined up for Saturday. Saturday evening we will have a banquet with awards and entertainment. Sunday morning we are going to have a breakfast where I hope to discuss where BCHO is headed and possibly set some goals. We will get everyone more information about registration and what is going to happen as we get it put together.

I think everyone knows that this year's State Ride at Allen Creek horse camp was cancelled at the last minute due to fire. The Forest Service asked our folks that were already there to leave. The fires that were burning in the area blew up and there was concern for their safety. I was at Allen Creek a few weeks ago and am happy to say the fire didn't come close to the camp. This year we are going to have the State Ride at Farm Well horse camp which is in the Silverlake area. The date for this year's ride is July 25th - 27th. Anyone who has ever attended the State Ride knows how much fun we have together. So mark your calendar, it would be great if we had a large turnout.

Dan Applebaker has been working very hard at pursuing the resolution asking the Forest Service to follow the Wilderness Act rules that allows the use of power tools for trail maintenance in the wilderness on a case by case basis. We are working with Dan and Dennis Daily (former wilderness advisor for BCHA) to set up a time comparison study with chain saws vs. cross cut saws. Our hope is to show that if we were allowed to use power saws in areas that have a lot of downed timber it would allow us to complete our trail clearing much quicker and more importantly safer. The thought is that by completing projects quicker that it would free us up to clear more trails and hopefully help reduce the backlog of unmaintained trails on the forests. It is important to note that we are not asking to be able to use power saws for routine trail maintenance but for extreme cases such as burn areas where there is an inordinate amount of downed timber. Once we have completed our study we are hoping to present the results to the region six supervisor.

As most of you know we have been trying to put together some guide lines for our chapters in an attempt to help them work with bicycle groups as those opportunities arise. I want to thank the committee for the work they are doing trying to put together the guidelines. The intent was to help identify things that our chapters should look closely at when entering into an MOU (memorandum

of understanding) with a bike group. Safety was another thing that we hoped to address. We also wanted to make a strong statement that bicycles do not belong in the wilderness. This was not intended to be a statement against multiuse trails, where they make sense and are safe. I realize that for every negative experience there are several positive things that have happened with bikes. Meeting a bike with a single horse is a lot different than meeting a bike with a string of pack mules. You can train all you want but it is hard to control a pack string when you meet a fast moving bike. I wish that we didn't have to address the hard subjects, but we do. Back Country Horsemen of America was formed over forty years ago to push back against the Forest Service. The Forest Service was trying to remove bridges and structure that made it possible for equestrians to access the wilderness in parts of Montana. BCHA, in the past, has never been afraid to take on the hard subjects. BCHO was formed not as a riding club but as a service organization whose goal was to follow and promote the five principles of BCHA. One of those principles is "to work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use". There is an element of the bike community that would like to take that away from us. It is very important that we, the members of BCHO work together as one to tackle these tough issues. I have found that most members of BCHO are very passionate folks. I wouldn't want it any other way. I think it is very important that our emotions and passion don't tear us apart as we work through these tough subjects. We may never reach a total consensus on the bike issue. What is important is that we don't lose sight of the goals and principles of BCHA and BCHO. Wouldn't it be fun if we could just go ride and not worry about losing our access to the back country?

This is the time of the year when we have public meetings to attend. Please do. The more horse folks we can get to those meetings the better off we are. We also will be manning booths at horse shows and sportsman shows. It's always fun to sit in the booths and visit with folks about BCHO and what we do. Casey Hufstader and myself have been asked to work at BCHA's booth at the Rocky Mountain Elk foundations "Elk Camp" in Las Vegas this December. We plan on wearing BCHO stuff so that everyone knows where we are from.

I hope to see you all at the Winter Convention.

Thanks,

Jerry



PCTA Trail Work 2014

Submitted by: Jim & Sue Forsman, Columbia Gorge Chapter

Every year we look forward to the posting of the PCTA trail work schedule. It's a challenge to work as many of their needs into our calendar as we can. We have three pack mules that spend an awful lot of time unemployed and I really do think they like being out and about doing something.

Packing for the trail crew is a relative easy job that is really appreciated. We get to see country we wouldn't otherwise see and work with people that are like-minded. Sometimes we just pack in and/or out and sometimes there is work for the mules to do. We are fortunate to have a great USFS person to work with and after much nagging Jim Thorton procured two sets of gravel bags for us to use. So we offer our services to all contacts. Over the years we have done five jobs for the USFS and three jobs with the PCTA. Work crews are always really impressed by the amount of rock moved and the fun of having animals to work with.

This year was a hoot with a new packer and her pack animal Jasper, the donkey. Corrine Davis is a member of our chapter who wanted to start packing and we had a perfect beginner job for them. They packed bear boxes in 5 miles to Ramona Falls on Mt. Hood. There were a few issues of course, such as getting Corrine to go around the proper side of a tree and the 'crossing of the river'. Now we've all heard that donkeys are stubborn but that's not exactly so; they just do things their own way in their own time. To wrap it up, all went well and we all had a great experience.









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Pioneer Days

Submitted by: Linda Hanson

On September 15 I received the following from OET and shortly after, it was also sent by BCH East Cascades chapter:

"Good afternoon!

My name is Lisa Clark and I'm the public affairs officer for the Prineville BLM. We are hosting an event for National Public Lands Day and the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act on Sept. 27 - at Reynolds Pond, east of Bend.

We are planning a Pioneer Day to showcase many of the traditional arts and skills of the early pioneer days. While we can't hold a large event in the Badlands Wilderness due to group size limitations, we decided to hold just off the north side.

I would like to have a horse/mule packing station designed to demonstrate some of the gear and help that packing provides. I think this would be a great compliment to our many other stations such as Dutch oven cooking, traditional surveying and mapping, flint knapping, canoeing, and more.

I had a packer lined up but he recently took a fire assignment to the Willamette National Forest and doesn't think he'll be back in time to help.

I know this is last minute, but would any of the OET members like to step in and help? I can provide tables and chairs for your station to show off gear and supplies; and if you can bring a horse and/or a mule that would be spectacular!

This will be a free, family-friendly event and I hope you can participate! I'm attaching our flyers and poster so you have some more information, but please let me know if you have any questions!

Thank you very much, Lisa Clark Public Affairs Officer Prineville BLM 3050 N.E. 3rd St. Prineville, OR 97754"





I sent a quick note to Lisa letting her know I was at least willing and might be able to recruit at least one other person. My experience was limited, but my mules were nice. She graciously accepted the offer and let me know she'd be there at Reynolds Pond on Saturday at 8 a.m., there would be room to high line and park. Lunch would be provided for volunteers.

I contacted ECBCH and let them know I'd be going, and fellow member Jack Scott agreed to go too! We'd take three mules, and pack saddles and highline, and play it by ear once we got there, having never been to such an event.

We arrived a bit after 8 a.m. and another BCH member, Robyn Snyder, met us as we drove in, found where to park and helped us unload. There was a foot bridge across an irrigation canal, and on the far side were the stations for visitors being set up around Reynolds Pond, east of Bend and near Alfalfa. The foot bridge was being used to carry supplied to the various stations, and a youth group, Americorp, was there in force pitching in with tables, chairs, water, etc.

Robyn, Jack and I took the mules about a mile upstream to a shallow crossing, Sure, some really, really good animals would have stepped into the steep sided swift canal, but then, we have only good animals. Jack's mule, Cass, was in a pack saddle, or she might have been convinced with him riding, to cross. I was



riding one of mine and ponied the other one. None wanted to step into the current! Robyn, our hero, waded in to her knees and led Cass and the other two followed. Then my riding mule went back across the ditch, led again by Robyn, to pick up Jack.

We rode the mile or so back to the pond and set up a high line, tree savers and all. The public, and a lot of kids, came by for several hours, and petted and fed the apples we had to the mules. We talked about the pack saddle, britchen, loading packs and how that was the way pioneers carried most of what they needed. The kids got stickers at each station to complete a sort of scavenger hunt.

Smokey the Bear walked by at one point, and the mules went on alert. However, they all took the petting and apples in stride, and no one got hurt. Some kids eager to be close, hugged mule legs and were a little excitable, but it was a good experience for them and the mules.

Lunch was delivered to all the volunteers, and we had a chance to walk around the pond and see the fire watch station, the survey station, arrowhead making and doll making stations, dutch oven cooking demo, and everyone seemed to have a good time. Many demonstrators had come before, and had plans to come again.

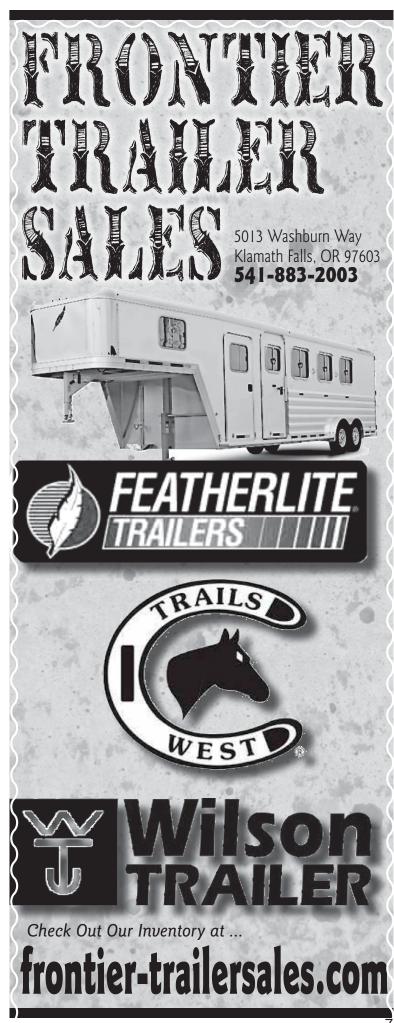
When the day ended, it was either walk the mules a mile to the shallow crossing, or use the foot bridge, which was again in heavy use with visitors leaving and volunteers packing their supplies out. Jack and his molly Cass crossed the ridge, though the hand rail was narrow and right at rigging height. We stripped the other two mules of their tack and thankfully, they too crossed. It was a happy moment!

It was a great cool, but sunny fall day to be in the outdoors, and the kids were worth every minute of it. Some of the adults too, were glad to tell of their mule experiences. I mentioned that my mules had their quirks; one would follow but hated to lead and the other did OK with packs but had bucked under saddle. The man listening said he was glad to get the whole story and not just hear their praises sung. Maybe he will remember honesty is the best, any time.

Thanks for reading,

Linda Hanson with Jack Scott and Robyn Snyder By the way, we had two other volunteers all day - a firefighter and an Americorp worker, both gals were wonderful!





"Wilderness Management" a Paradox or a Necessity?

Submitted by: Dan Applebaker

Natural conditions and biological reactions from man-caused interferences outside wilderness have affected changes in wilderness since the 1964 Wilderness Act was passed. Nature is an ever changing phenomenon and mankind's influences never seem to remain static for long. The lists of such changes are long and include the following examples:

Mercury pollution in high mountain lakes is affecting aquatic plants and fish.

High elevation White bark Pine, a species needed by wildlife such as the Clarks Nutcracker and the Grizzly is dying and could be gone within 10 years.

Invasive plant species such as Cheat grass and Knapweed alter wilderness ecosystems by taking over habitats of native plant species.

Cutthroat Trout runs in wilderness rivers, so important to grizzly bears and other wildlife, are depleted by stocking lakes used by these trout outside wilderness with predatory Lake Trout.

Wilderness ecology is changing from Carbon Dioxide and its greenhouse effect.

Hotter and dryer summers are creating more damaging fires in wilderness that may grow back in different vegetative types than existed before the fires. Timber stands being replaced with grasslands or brush fields can degrade habitat for many species of wildlife and fish.

More frequent and intensive insect and disease mortality of trees inside and outside of wilderness plug trails with down trees.

The Forest Service lacks the funding to clear the abnormal amount of down trees from trails and is unable to affect any maintenance on nearly two-thirds of their trails. This lack of maintenance is restricting access to provide for the use and enjoyment of the American people.

We have reached a situation where conditions are not the same as when the Wilderness System was created. Wilderness managers and their management, so long totally related to visitor use management, are now being asked to also consider limited vegetative management to minimize biological changes created by outside influences.

Is wilderness a place where, "the hand of

man has not set foot" and only the bare minimum of management is permitted; or is it place where management is necessary to, "be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment of wilderness"? Do you see the paradox? The nation's leading environmental groups have differing opinions. A representative of one group wants only the most minimum management and letting nature take its course while the representative of another group says, "If you want something that looks unchanged, you are going to have to manage it. They add, "If you leave something unchanged it will be different".

We, as Back Country Horsemen, are dependent on an adequate wilderness trail system to continue our historic and current recreational saddle and pack stock use. That leans us toward the anthropocentric philosophy side of the "wilderness for people's sake" or "wilderness for wilderness' sake" philosophical notions. These two philosophies (anthropocentric vs. biocentric) represent the extreme ends of the spectrum of wilderness management. The answer is somewhere in between.

Roland Cheek recommends, in his recent article in the BCHA National Newsletter, "What we need is an institutional paradigm that favors trail riding where appropriate, and especially where there is a history of pack and saddle stock trail use". We totally agree – but can it be changed?

Perhaps if such a paradigm shift by the wilderness managers happened they would consider recreation, and therefore access by trails, to be an important part of wilderness management. The Wilderness Act (Public Law 88-577, Sept. 3, 1964) states in Sec. 4 (b), wilderness shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation, and historical use. We agree that one may not be any more important as a wilderness value than any other of these purposes, but recreation and historic use should at least be as important as any other. These two certainly take up most of wilderness management's effort and funds.

Perhaps such a paradigm change would place recreational use and access (and the trails necessary to accomplish that public purpose) high enough on the list to further their attempt to maintain existing access as near as possible to current levels. The Back Country Horsemen of America are asking for such changes by new legislation now being presented.

We understand the Agency's lack of ability to perform because the lack of funding. We also are aware of the increase in maintenance necessary to meet the new challenge of increased fires and insect/ disease mortality. A recent Forest Service news release stated that, "the number of wildfires on public lands has doubled and the acreage has tripled since 1980". The report further disclosed that, "growth in the fire program necessitated by the increased fire workload has resulted in a 14% reduction of trail budgets". We also recognize that more than 20 million acres of Forest Service lands have been impacted by the Mountain Pine Beetle. Both the increased occurrence and size of wildfires, and the unprecedented impact of the pine beetle can only increase the 63% of Forest Service trails currently receiving no maintenance (as noted by a recent GAO Report).

We are relatively certain that trails that do not receive maintenance will be abandoned and lost to our use. We see that happening today. Trails are not available for our use if they are plugged with logs or washed out. This "passive management" is done with no agency plans to open them and no decision (NEPA or otherwise) made public to close them. We also see little hope for a major reversal of the huge trail maintenance deficit for three reasons: 1. the continued lack of funding from Congress to the agencies to maintain trails, 2. the increased maintenance necessary to respond to the extraordinary amount of down trees, and 3. the continued lack of interest/desire by the agencies to maintain as many miles of trails as possible given inadequate funding.

This situation may be the biggest emergency the Back Country Horsemen, dedicated to "Keeping America's Trails Open", has ever experienced.

The entire Back Country Horsemen organization is working hard to do what we can to reverse the expanding trail maintenance deficit, but we think more can be done.

We can push for the paradigm shift mentioned above. We can request consideration for limited and managed use of power saws to open wilderness trails that the Forest Service cannot maintain with primitive tools. These are trails that would likely be abandoned because of the lack of maintenance. We know this will not solve the trail deficit problem, but will move in that direction. It would also allow local Chapters to open many more miles of trails in their local wildernesses.

The High Desert Trail Riders Chapter (HDTR) authored a resolution addressing the power saw use mentioned above. The resolution has been ratified by the Back Country Horsemen of Oregon's (BCHO) Board of Directors.

A resolution is no better than its followup actions and BCHO has planned the actions listed below.

- 1. It is imperative that the Back Country Horsemen of Washington support us in this effort in the Pacific Northwest Region Six. We have some positive signs that may happen and are working out the details for meetings with them to solicit their support.
- 2. A study to compare the efficiency of power saws to cross cut saws is being set

- up. The study will not only show differences in cutting times but also consider safety differences, fatigue differences, compare the ability to remove all down trees no matter what position the down tree is in, and the amount of personnel necessary to make an efficient logging out operation.
- 3. The resolution will be presented to the Back Country Horsemen of America at their meeting in Sacramento in April of 2015. Hopefully we can gain support from other states by this informational presentation and thereby lend more support in our effort to keep as many of our trails open as we can.
- 4. There also has been talk of putting together a PowerPoint program showing some of the unique trail maintenance problems faced in the west, as compared to the other parts of the country. This program will feature the large trees (three to five feet in diameter) down on trails on the west side of our state. It will also include the multiple trees down across trails due to bark beetle mortality, wind caused blowdown, and forest fire mortality (often in excess of 100 down trees per mile of trail).
- 5. The resolution will be presented to the Regional Forester of Region 6. A

meeting is planned to request his support in allowing his deciding line officers to have the freedom to make the decision whether power saws are the appropriate and necessary minimum tool without peer criticism from above. It is a common misunderstanding within the Agency that use of power saws is illegal in wilderness. There is however, a process in place (The Minimum Needs Analysis) that considers the use of other than primitive tools if that is the only way to accomplish the purposes of the Wilderness Act.

We will challenge the Agency to accept a paradigm change by considering the use of motorized tools as an acceptable and appropriate method to provide access to wilderness for the use and enjoyment of the American people, yet still leave it unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. So is wilderness management a paradox or a necessity? We think it is both. The wilderness must be managed to provide access (trails) to meet the wilderness purposes of recreation and historic use, and also incorporate the necessary management "to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness".



A Little Mule Nobody Wanted -Jasper's Story

Submitted by: Joy Senger, Columbia Gorge

The first time I met Jasper he was standing in a stall looking distant and dejected. He accepted my affection, but was noncommittal about returning the favor. I learned that he was for sale. His owner had picked him up at an auction and now I don't remember why she was selling him, but my heart broke for him. At that time, my husband and I had decided that we were interested in making a change from horses to mules. Here was a chance to try that out - he was cheap!

The seller sent him off to someone who was putting some training time on him. No one really knew how much training he had. When we saw him next, he was in the hands of an old gentleman who had him saddled and was ground driving him in a small barn. He had yet to ride him. He had only been hired for 30 days of training and more training meant a higher purchase price. A week or so later we brought the little mule home. The first thing he did was nearly kill the dog with a swift kick as he came out of the trailer.

A mule trainer I met a year or so later told me, "Your first mule is never a mistake. He'll teach you something one way or the other." Truer words were never spoken. While he never hurt anyone or caused us any heartache, I learned enough to know I didn't know enough. I quickly determined that I would likely never ride him. We made each other nervous. He was far too quick and agile for my liking. Little Jasper politely tolerated my efforts to groom and show affection, but he would never relax. He avoided eye contact. His body was always tense when I rubbed him. I always felt he was poised to jump or at least move away given enough reason. The farrier wasn't wild about working with him, but they had an uneasy truce.

In time we moved and never seemed to have the time or opportunity (or desire?) to do anything with him. I started sacking him out and preparing him to pack, but with no experience with that I decided we needed to let him go to someone who could make better use of him. We only knew of one fellow with mules and he agreed to take him. We followed up a few months later and were told that he was being used and loved. End of story. Not hardly.

This year at the Packing Clinic (some 9 years later) I found myself in a conversation with a group of fellow BCHO folks which included Phil, Laurie and Casey Hufstader. One comment leads to another and I realized that the mule they are discussing is none other than Jasper. Casey provides the proof with a photo saved on his phone. My little mule has been right under my nose for about 5 years and I didn't know it. I will skip all of the details of how he came into the Hufstader's possession. It is not a pretty story (I'll let Phil tell it), but suffice it to say that he passed through a few hands in his life to get to where he is now.

I had the pleasure of seeing him again in September. Phil & Laurie brought him with them to Sisters Cow Camp for the board meeting just so I could. His name is Poncho now. He made eye contact with me and I believe he recognized me when he saw me. He let me love on him and I noticed that when I did his body was relaxed and soft. He did not object to my touch. He has a job and according to Phil he does it well. He is appreciated. He has his own kid (Cody rides him, too). Phil describes him as a "pine box mule". He's only leaving them in a pine box. He has his forever home.

And somebody wants him.



- Top Packs & Covers
- Camping Equipment
- Dutch Ovens
- Riley Tent Stoves



Saddle Bags

Mule Halters

Breeching

Welcome!

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2014 Pack Trip

Submitted by: Jim & Sue Forsman

Most people can get away for a week of packing into the backcountry and that's how it started for us. But we just felt we were getting into the grove by the end of the week so we wanted to extend the fun. Our longest pack was this year was 28 days in the Wallowa Whitman Wilderness. The most difficult part of a trip like this is food, for you and your animals. You have to go where there will be forage for the stock.

Being a backpacker before I ever met an equine made packing with them a real treat. We take a backpacker stove in case we can't have a fire, and every meal that is cooked is a one pot concoction.

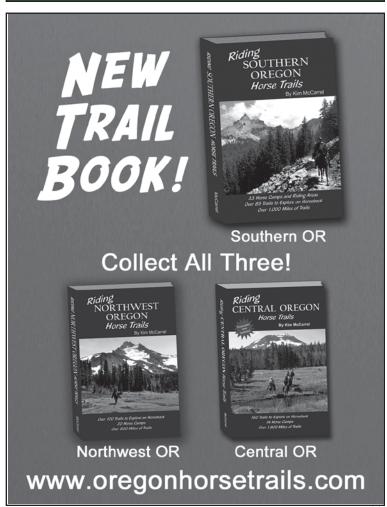
This year I got smart and made four boxes for eight days of food in each. Two boxes fit in one pannier. This system worked really well, it kept things in order and easy to balance. Each box weighed 12 lbs. Every meal is measured, dried and rationed. If we ran out of something we just made do until time to open the next box. We only ran out of hot chocolate once, and we had too many granola bars. The animals got 1 lb. of senior feed or pellets per animal per day, so basically they live off the land. They really looked forward to their little treats.

When we are out, we stay out, so everything goes in on day one. We like to move camp every 4-6 days, depending on feed and places to explore. At least one day is spent scouting where our next camp will be. More often than not, we have to clear the trail to get there so we don't want to do that with packs on the animals. This year we cleared 13 miles of trail. When we do trail work we do it to spec because we have the time and it's just what we were trained to do. Proud to be a Back Country Horseman!

Jim & Sue Forsman Jackson, Sonny, Katie, Snickers & Patsy







Cody's Corner

Submitted by: Phil Hufstader

Hi, my name is Cody and I just turned 11, and if you have been following my adventures, you know I have a lot of fun for my age. The winter of 2013, I lost my riding mule to old age. He was 35+ in age and finally he just gave up the ghost. Grandpa and Dad looked around to find something to fill in until one of our colts came of age, but in a fit of insanity, Grandpa one day said why don't we just put him on one of the filly colts that had just turned three and had been packed light all summer. The reason being, both the filly colt and I had both started to spread our wings, and Grandpa figured it was time to put two strong minds together to figure out life. So at the start of 2014 the filly colt and I became of age. January to July was a real bummer for the Hufstader family, it just seemed a dark cloud hung around us all the time. Grandpa got kicked in the head by a black mule, I broke my left arm when I stumbled in the rocks while hunting, and Grandma fell and broke her ankle. Dad was going through tough times, and my Mom up and married a flat lander. So come the middle of August, Grandpa had a brain storm. Dad said that came from the bump on his head where the mule had kicked him.

We packed up and headed to the wilderness for a week. We had only been there for a couple of days when a packer friend rode into camp and asked if we had seen the mess left by someone in one of the lower meadows. He said the Feds where looking for the guy and wanted help from us to pack out the garbage and equipment that was left. Well Grandpa spooled up and started yelling. He said the guy who made the mess needed to come back and clean it up himself. Right then, he went off the deep end, as Dad said later, and told us to pack up. Se we're packing out and going over east. All the way out Grandpa kept muttering out loud that the younger generation had no ethics, and it was hard to teach LNT to people who didn't care. Grandma was concerned that the bump on Grandpa's head was affecting his thought process, but he kept saying no, it just made it clear that the old ways were going away. We hit the trail head and packed up and headed east. Then the funniest thing happened, Dad said he felt that we had left the dark cloud on the west side of the mountain. I kept looking back and the skies were clear, I wondered if Dad had got kicked in the head also.

That night we pulled into a large trailhead on the SW corner of SB Wilderness and several rigs were parked just above the meadow leading down into the breaks. Well here is where things started going south for me. You see, this little lady came riding over on a fourteen hand mule and introduced herself and said she had just turned 12 that day and they were here to celebrate her birthday, and would I like to come over to the fire. Grandpa started laughing. He said Dad had come over on this side of the mountain to go rabbit hunting, you know the rabbits with big buckles, and now his son was standing there with his upper lip curled and neck all swelled, in fact he started calling me spike. I didn't have a clue what he was talking about, but when Dad said that he would grab a bottle of Snow Snake Medicine and we would wander over to the fire, I was all for that.

Well now is when the story gets a real life meaning. While sitting at the fire Dad happened to mention that we traveled around and packed as volunteers in the wilderness to help out different agencies as BCHO members. Things got real quiet until one of

the parents spoke up and told Dad that he had gone to a BCHO meeting over in the valley and had left the meeting because all they wanted to talk about was how they would help put out obstacles in some arena and who would ride in some parade. He had been told the chapter was a Back Country chapter at the Albany Expo, not some riding club. Well Dad seized on the moment after passing the Snake Bite Medicine around and asked if any of them wanted to join a new chapter he was working on, seeings how every one in the crowd was under 35 and had their own pack outfits and the equipment to go with it. So you see that is how the new chapter called the High Country Wilderness Packers came to be. Grandpa said it was ironic because that is just how the original BCHA chapter got its spurs in the ground.

So from August to the last of October several of the new members have been meeting and opening trails, hauling equipment for the Agencies, and just plain getting involved in wilderness issues. That first night they elected their officers and made it plain, or as plain as the notes would allow. With no light other than that from the fire and the Snake Bite Medicine, they would follow the five BCHO principles to the letter, adding one additional principle of that of educating the younger generation in the art of the old time traditional packing methods. They broke the group up into three regions with each region having a spokesperson to speak for all the members at large that would join this chapter.

Boy did that group take off, people who had never been a member of any chapter started calling and wanting to sign up left and right. I thought this was great, every weekend for ten weeks I got to ride with a cute little girl on a mule. But I'm still confused, you see Grandpa kept calling me spike and Dad started filling his rabbit tags? I never saw him bag any rabbits, but Grandpa kept saying that the beauty was in the eyes of the buckle, what ever that means. I'm sure Grandpa's head injury hasn't healed completely yet, but I do know he got rid of that old black mule in a good trade for a quarter horse filly.

So you see things turned out great by the time hunting season

came around. My arm healed, I met several new friends my age that pack with their parents, and my Dad has a smile on his face. So until next time, keep your spurs tickling your mount, your powder dry and keep away from pa-raids.

Cody Hufstader

PS: Did I mention I killed a nice buck and that quiet little gal has been calling me. I wonder if Dad knows?



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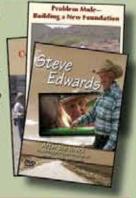
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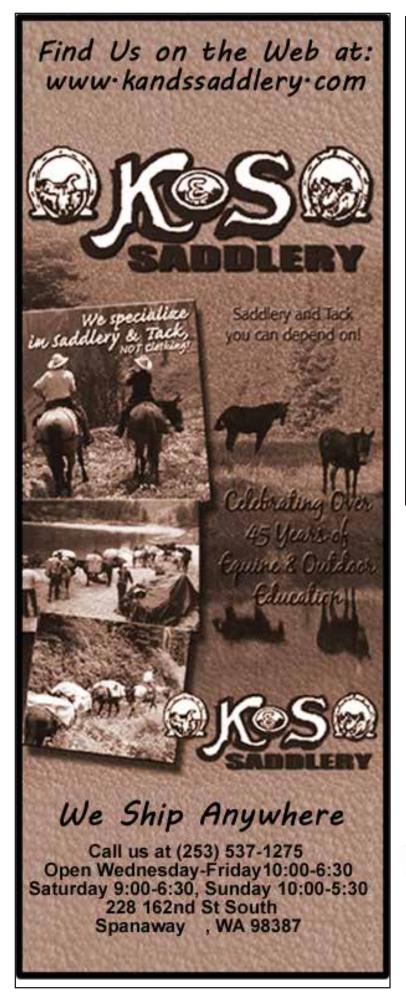
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To WORK to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.

To ASSIST the various government, state, and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.

To EDUCATE, encourage and solicit active participation in the use of the back country resource by stock users and the general public commensurate with our heritage.

TO FOSTER and encourage the formation of new state organizations and BCHA.

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