SIS-Q-TRAILS

Backcountry Horsemen of California
Top of the State Unit

Volume 30
Issue 4
Fourth Quarter, 2026

https://tos-bchc.com/
https://www.facebook.com/bchctopofthestate/



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's that time of year for my brief 4th quarter newsletter message. In August we sent one of our youths to the Ascend Wilderness Experience to Stoddard and Doe Lakes in the Trinity Alps Wilderness. We sponsored Aubrey Champlin, daughter of Alison Pick. She gave us a talk at our September meeting about her experience. She was a little shy about speaking in front of a group of people, so we let her speak from her chair. After a few questions were asked about her participation in the event, she was no shy girl. She told us about her experience at clearing trails. How to read a log before you cut it with a crosscut saw so you would not get injured, how to use the saw in a way that it would not bind on you, using wedges so it would not bind, make sure you have a safe place to go if the log rolls or falls the wrong way.



Clearing brush from the trails and make sure the trail is wide enough for hikers, horses and pack strings. Clearing trails through burned out timber and getting black from clearing the burned timber, and how to get along with others in the group and make sure that no one is put in danger because of your actions or someone else's actions. She feels this experience has made her a better person and how to get along with others. She was glad to have had the opportunity to participate in this event. She plans to attend more events like this and Top of the State Unit will be behind her. This is what makes you proud as a group organization like the BCH that you make a difference in the lives of our youth members through programs like this. I give thanks to Sam Burrows of the Shasta Trinity Unit and his crew for working with all the youths that were there. I am proud to make my message here that this is what BCH is all about, showing them the great outdoor experience is for all to enjoy and that they will be the next generation to carry this legacy on for all to enjoy, whether you are a hiker, a horse person or one that just enjoys the outdoors, this country is for all to enjoy.

President Robert Robustellini

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WEEK OF LEARNING

Aubrey Champlin (top of photo with mule) was chosen to participate in the Stockmanship & Stewardship Teen Internship with Ascend Wilderness Experience in August. She had so much fun she wants to participate again next year.

See more, page 4

SIS-Q-TRAILS

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SUBMISSIONS AND DEADLINES: The Top of the State Unit welcomes new member contributions, club news, events, calendar dates, and items of interest that you wish to have submitted in the next issue of the newsletter. These need to be submitted by the 15th of the month and will be printed as space is available. This newsletter is edited and published four times per year.
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PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

This newsletter is a document of communication that disseminates information of the Top of the State Unit of the BCHC covering schedules, information, philosophy and historical materials pertinent to the participants of the back country of Northern California.
1. Perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness.
2. Assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resources.
3. Educate, encourage and solicit active participation in wise and sustaining use of the back country by horsemen and the general public.
4. Work to ensure that the public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
5. Foster and encourage the formation of new state backcountry horsemen organizations.

Learn more about Backcountry Horsemen of California: https://www.bchcalifornia.org/

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The Top of the State Unit is online and on Facebook!
Important forms are available for download and printing on our website. Go to tos-bchc.com and click on Forms to see the full list of documents. The Top of the State Unit Facebook page can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/bchctopofthestate/

Unit Briefs

Board of Directors opening

We have one urgent Unit Director vacancy for the 2-year term through 2027. Board of Directors responsibilities and requirements:

- Must be a BCHC member in good standing
- Serve a two-year term
- Attend monthly meetings
- Help manage the affairs, property, business and control of policy of the organization
- Bring new, fresh ideas!

Contact Robert Robustellini at (530) 468-5636 or muletrackstoo@gmail.com for more info.

Carter Meadows fuels reduction plan

The Klamath National Forest is in the early planning stages for a potential fuels reduction and meadow restoration project in the Carter Meadows and Trail Creek areas in the Salmon/Scott River Ranger District. KNF leaders have invited our Unit leadership to consult with them on these plans and we plan to work closely with them regarding impacts to equestrian campgrounds and trails in that area. We will update this story as more information becomes available. A formal public comment period will be available, but the date for that opportunity has not been announced.

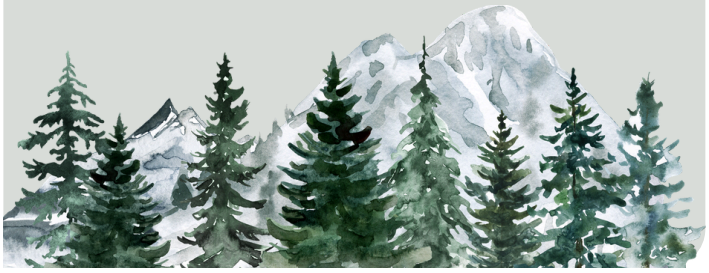
Apply for Hike the Hill opportunity

The BCHC State Board of Directors has decided to financially support a BCHC member to participate in the annual Hike the Hill trek to Washington, D.C., scheduled for Feb. 28-March 4, 2027. The BCHA Director of Public Lands makes this trip annually and is usually accompanied by the then current chair of BCHA. The selected BCHC member will coordinate with BCHA representatives regarding the event. People that BCHA/BCHC meet with in Washington D.C. are interested in real world experiences, so desirable qualifications for applicants include packing experience and public lands project experience. The selected person is expected to attend and present at the next State Board of Directors meeting following participation in Hike the Hill. If you are interested in this opportunity, please see DOCUMENTS & FORMS, Public Lands section on the BCHC website for Requirements and the Application Form. Link: https://www.bchcalifornia.org/documents-forms/#PublicLands

Welcome New Members!

Desiree Hardin

Lavina & Michael Smith



GIVE TO BCHC

If you would like to support our Unit and/or BCHC with a tax-deductible donation, please go to the BCHC website, www.bchcalifornia.org, and scroll to the "Support Our Cause" section to find a "Donate" button. **If you want to designate your donation for the Top of the State Unit, please select Education Fund and add a note that your donation is for our Unit's Education Fund.** The donation site will automatically send a thank you letter to you acknowledging receipt of the donation.

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It's that simple!



UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

My name is **Aubrey Champlin**, and I had the pleasure of attending a week of stockmanship/stewardship in the Trinity Alps Wilderness with Ascend Wilderness Experience.

Ascend is a program to get teens out of the house, off of technology, and into the beautiful nature that surrounds us. Ascend offers many camps, including field science, teen trail crew, stewardship weekend, and stockman/stewardship. They also offer backpacking trips for adults and youth.

Ascend is a great program for any kid. It is a great opportunity to learn, meet new people, grow as an independent and a leader, and enjoy the outdoors. I'm glad we were able to partner up with Backcountry Horsemen to pack in tools and camp. To me, BCH is a great organization to keep the wilderness open to the public and keep our beautiful high mountain lakes accessible. I want to recognize Sam Burrows for staying the whole time up there, teaching us, working with us, and keeping up with all our craziness.

On my trip with Ascend, we cleared trail to Doe Lake. Our routine every day was: wake up at seven, get dressed, eat breakfast, make lunch, fill water filters, bottles, and bladders, gather tools, stretch, and head out at eight. From there, we would work till four. Every day we would go to Stoddard; Stoddard was a closer lake to camp than Doe Lake. After the lake, we would go back to camp at six, get changed into our pajamas, start a fire, and eat dinner. While all the kids were at the lake, our guides Matt and Mar would start dinner.

On our first day of work, we cleared brush and had lunch at twelve-ish. On our second day of work, we started crosscutting. That day we cut about fifteen trees. On the third day, we had no work; it was our rest day. That morning we were able to sleep in; it was a slow morning, after everyone had breakfast, we got ready for the lake and made lunch. We rode Sam's mule, Immajean, then hiked up to Stoddard and hung out there all day, and came back to camp at six to have dinner. At the lake, everyone had fun; Travis tried fishing- no bites; Matt was trying to teach Jack how to properly butterfly swim. Evalynn found a log to read on and lay out in the sun; Mika, Fiona, and Arturo hung out on the other side of the lake, then Jack, Roman, and I were throwing rocks in the lake and having fun.

On our third day of work, we cleared about 46 trees. Two of those trees were "trouble" logs. The first tree was almost four feet in diameter, give or take. On that log, it took about three hours to prep it to make it safe to cut, including cribbing (supporting the log so it doesn't bind), delimbing, and debarking. After that, we had lunch and got back to work. We finally started cutting it. The cutting probably took another hour. After we were done with that, we continued and cleared many more trees. After we got to a dry meadow, we decided to call it a day. Although some of us did decide to hike all the way up to Doe. We used that hike to scout to see what we had to do the next day; unfortunately, we would've needed another week to clear the rest. On our last day of work, we decided to go to the stock camp on the far side of Stoddard and clear out the campground and trail to the camp. At camp, every night we would have a campfire; at that campfire we would play games, whether that be a card game or a game as a group. I taught Roman how to play golf (a card game) and Spite and Malice (also a card game). As a group, we played Mafia. A couple of nights we had hot cocoa, and others we had Oreos, and on our last night we had s'mores. My favorite part of the day was always the campfire.

On the very last day we woke up, broke down camp, ate breakfast, packed up, and started hiking out. On the way out, we were all tired, but you could tell we all had fun. After we got into town, we dropped off all our stuff at the office in Weaverville, put back all our tools, and ordered pizza at Brick's Pizza. After pizza, we went to Northstar to get ice cream, then walked back to the office and hung out till our parents picked us up one by one. That week was such a great experience that I hope any kid who gets the chance can enjoy it as I did. I definitely want to go again next year.

A special thanks to Ascend Wilderness Experience and Backcountry Horsemen.

https://ascendwilderness.org/programs/

Photo courtesy of BCHC Shasta Trinity Unit



Photo courtesy of of Jamie Essex

Teaming up for trail clearing and fish plant

Article by Michele Machado Woods

On June 30-July 3, members of the Top of the State Unit and Outfitter's Legacy Project joined the BCHC Shasta Trinity Unit for a trail clearing and fish plant event in the Caribou Wilderness in the Lassen National Forest. Three teens from the OLP division known as the Young Mule Co. and two Veterans from the OLP Valor Ridge Division were active participants alongside five of our members: Kelly York, Aysha Falconer, Alan Woods, Scott and Jamie Essex. Under the instruction of Shasta Trinity Unit packer/sawyer Sam Burrows, the team helped clear 10 miles of trail, removing 56 logs with a crosscut saw, and planting 13,000 Eagle Lake Rainbow Trout fingerlings provided by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife in seven lakes. Volunteers also cleared "numerous" burnt saplings with hand saws and lots of debris by hand.

A video highlighting this work can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbdFFDNoA3A

Leisurely ride provides chance to visit, catch up

Article by Michele Machado Woods

Our annual group ride at Deer Mountain on the eastern side of the Klamath National Forrest winds through cow trails and Forest Service roads in the timber. The side-by-side riding and easy terrain give riders a chance to visit and laugh between stops to collect cards for our Mavericks Wild card game. This year we saw six cows that darted through the timber and walked down the road in front of us. They likely thought we were there to round them up.

Eleven riders enjoyed the 4-mile loop ride, the gorgeous weather and a yummy potluck lunch after the ride. We're always thrilled to see great attendance at this event with everyone having such busy schedules.

Congrats to Barbara and Betsy for winning the fun card game. Welcome new member, Desiree!

And thanks to Alan, Robert and John for handing out the cards during the ride. We loved seeing everyone!



Photo courtesy of Alan Woods

IDEAS FOR 2027 EVENTS

TRAIL ETIQUETTE & LEAVE NO TRACE

We'd like to host a series of seminars, open to the public, to educate all trail users about trail etiquette and Leave No Trace Principals. Seminars would be in cooperation with local businesses and the Forest Service.

AT OUR SEPTEMBER 3 BOARD MEETING WE COLLECTED IDEAS FROM MEMBERS

BACKCOUNTRY EDUCATION

We envision creating a youth educational program that would culminate in a trail clearing and overnight packing trip on a local historical trail. Program would be in partnership with the Outfitter's Legacy Project and the Forest Service.

MEETING FORMATS

In order to get more participation in our monthly board meetings, we'll look at scheduling a "fun" element after some meetings, like a BBQ potluck meal, cowboy poetry around a campfire, or a group trail ride.

SNAIL MAIL WORKS!

In an effort to reach more members, we'll mail monthly or quarterly flyers to all members and this newsletter to those who don't have email or internet access.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS

- Educational events for high-lining, packing & trail stewardship at a local campground
- Dutch Oven cooking demo and competition
- More trail rides throughout the year
- Scavenger Hunt/Lingo rides
- Mule Appreciation Day
- Equine bodywork demos by local clinicians
- Basic farrier skills
- Backcountry first aid
- Emergency preparedness

Don't miss our end-of-year events!

Members and the public are always welcome to attend our monthly meetings.

Check out the following pages for more event flyers!

OCT. 1
7 p.m.

Board of Directors Meeting
Location: *Grenada Fire Hall*

OCT. 10
All Day

BCHC State Board of Directors Meeting
Location: *Hilmar, CA*

NOV. 5
7 p.m.

Membership Meeting
Location: *Fort Jones City/Community Hall*

DEC. 3
7 p.m.

Board of Directors Meeting
Location: *Grenada Fire Hall*

DEC. 5
5 p.m. (Happy Hour)
6 p.m. (Dinner)

Christmas Party
Location: *Fort Jones City/Community Hall*
Meal: *Ham and turkey provided; please bring a side dish or appetizer.*
Gift exchange and raffle: *Yes!*

Interns learn valuable equine, packing tips

Article by Betsy Stapleton

On July 22, six Scott River Watershed Council Youth Environmental Summer Studies (YESS) interns were introduced to horse packing by Backcountry Horsemen Top of the State Unit volunteers Robert Robustellini and Mathilda Barr. YESS is a summer youth employment and education program teaching youth employment skills and practical environmental science. The YESS interns learned that many backcountry trails were established by stock use and that horses and mules are still used today to haul supplies into the backcountry for trail maintenance and fire fighting in remote areas.

Mathilda started the afternoon by showing how to catch the horse, Apache, and shared that it is necessary to brush Apache and clean his feet before starting to load the pack gear, just like making sure that you don't have rocks in your shoes before starting a long hike. Interns learned that horses are prey animals and naturally enter a "flight mode" when scared or anxious and that there are ways to reassure the horse and help them relax and feel safe. Basic "horse language" was taught so that interns could read when the horse was relaxed. How to safely pass a pack team on the trail was explained and then practiced. Two teams of interns were challenged with a variety of tools to pack into pack bags, weigh to make sure the loads were balanced, and explain why they selected the tools and loaded them the way they did. Tips on how to improve the packing were given and then the Apache was loaded. Interns took turns leading Apache as if they were out on trail. Some interns had never been close to a horse before and were pleased to learn that Apache liked being petted and given cookies.



Photo courtesy of Betsy Stapleton

One intern reported "I learned that horse packing is more complicated than I thought and that horses aren't like a machine - they have feelings!" Mathilda and Robert said that they enjoyed the interns' enthusiasm and that the youth were very polite and asked good questions. Apache said, "I liked the horse cookies and being petted". All and all, it was a fun and informative afternoon.

Ride with us at the Bacigalupi Ranch!

Group trail ride and BBQ potluck lunch

October 3, 2026

Please join the BCHC Top of the State Unit for a group trail ride at the Bacigalupi Ranch in the foothills near Little Shasta. Ride will be approximately 7-8 miles on moderate terrain with some rocks.

When: PLEASE arrive by no later than 9 a.m.; ride starts at 9:30 a.m.

Address: 13632 Ball Mountain Little Shasta Road, Montague; follow BCHC signs to trailer parking and potluck lunch location. Message us for directions.

Members only? Yes, all riders must be current BCHC members. Non-members wanting to ride will need to sign up to be a member before or on the day of the event ($60 for one-year membership, $75 for a family). All youth riders age 17 and under MUST wear an equestrian helmet.

Cost: Free

RSVP: YES by September 30 if you plan to attend the potluck lunch. We'll need a firm headcount so we can purchase enough hamburgers and buns.



BBQ potluck lunch at the ranch: If you want to stay for lunch after the ride, please bring a potluck dish to share. Non-members are welcome to join us for lunch. We anticipate the lunch will start around 12:30 or 1 p.m. for anyone planning to join just for lunch.

HALLOWEEN OBSTACLES

CHALLENGE YOUR HORSE OR MULE ON OUR SPOOKY COURSE!

9:30 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.
PRACTICE ONLY
COME & GO ALL DAY

7330 STERCHI LN.
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FREE* & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!
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OCTOBER 24, 2026

Hosted by Backcountry Horsemen of California Top of the State Unit.
Riders 17 years old and younger must wear an equestrian helmet. No dogs on course.
Questions: Call or text Michele at 817-308-0258

Backcountry Horsemen of California



MAIL TO: **BCHC MEMBERSHIP 1280 State Rt. 208 Yerington, NV 89447**

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

A Family & Youth Oriented Organization

Release 4 2025 (11 Feb 25)

☐ **New** ☐ **Change**

☐ **Renewal**

PARENT UNIT AFFILIATION: (Select and CHECK a Unit as your Affiliation)

- ☐ Antelope Valley
- ☐ Eastern Sierra
- ☐ High Country
- ☐ High Sierra
- ☐ Kern River Valley
- ☐ Kern Sierra
- ☐ Los Padres
- ☐ Manzanita Riders
- ☐ Mid Valley
- ☐ Mother Lode
- ☐ North Bay
- ☐ Redshank Riders
- ☐ Redwood
- ☐ San Joaquín Sierra
- ☐ Santa Ana River
- ☐ Sequoia
- ☐ Shasta Trinity
- ☐ Sierra Freepackers
- ☐ Sutter Buttes
- ☒ Top of the State

DCTR (Your Membership Number): _____

MEMBER'S NAME - No Business Names, Print Clearly _____ SPOUSE/CO-MEMBER'S NAME - MUST SHARE SAME ADDRESS _____

Street Address/PO Box _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code (full 9 digits if known) _____ Area Code _____ Phone Number _____

Email Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Donation to BCHC Education Fund (Tax deductible) $_____ Enclosed: Check No.

Parent Unit Membership Types (Check One)

- ☐ 1 Year Individual $60
- ☐ 2 Year Individual $110
- ☐ 3 Year Individual $160
- ☐ 1 Year Family $75
- ☐ 2 Year Family $140
- ☐ 3 Year Family $205
- ☐ Young Adult (18-25 years old) $15 Include Date of Birth / /
- ☐ Benefactor $100
- ☐ Patron $250
- ☐ Mt. Whitney $500

Associate Membership: An Additional $15 PER UNIT is added to your Parent Unit Dues

Associate Membership Unit Affiliations MAY NOT BE FOR THE SAME UNIT AS YOUR PARENT UNIT

Associate Membership for: _____ $15/Unit
Unit Name (from above list)

Associate Membership for: _____ $15/Unit
Unit Name (from above list)

Please clip form along dashed line and keep the below portion for your records.

Parent BCHC Membership Types

Individual, Family, (Shared**), Benefactor, Patron, and Mt. Whitney

A Parent Membership is with a single Local Unit.

**A SHARED Membership is for two adults with differing last names who share a common address.

Associate Memberships

These special Memberships are only available to persons already holding Parent BCHC Membership. No one may sign up for an Associate Membership without 1) having registered one of the Parent Membership types, and 2) having selected Parent Unit affiliation.

Young Adult Memberships MUST include date of birth on application. The year you turn 24 is the last year you may renew under this membership.

Complete information regarding BCHC Membership is available on the MEMBERSHIP TAB at bchcalifornia.org or call (775) 463-3634

KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS

I submitted an Application Form for a -

☐ 1 Year Individual	$60
☐ 2 Year Individual	$110
☐ 3 Year Individual	$160
☐ 1 Year Family	$75
☐ 2 Year Family	$140
☐ 3 Year Family	$205
☐ Young Adult (18-25 years old)	$15
☐ Benefactor	$100
☐ Patron	$250
☐ Mt. Whitney	$500

☐ On that form, I also requested: _____ Associate Memberships

My Total Remittance:----------

My Check Number:_____

Date Mailed:_____

Verifying BCHC Membership by

1) BCHC Unit President's reports
2) BCHC Membership VP reports
3) a self-addressed stamped envelope submitted with this form
4) a valid email address