



Pony Tracks

The San Juan Back Country Horsemen newsletter

April 2019

Message from the President



Larry Smith

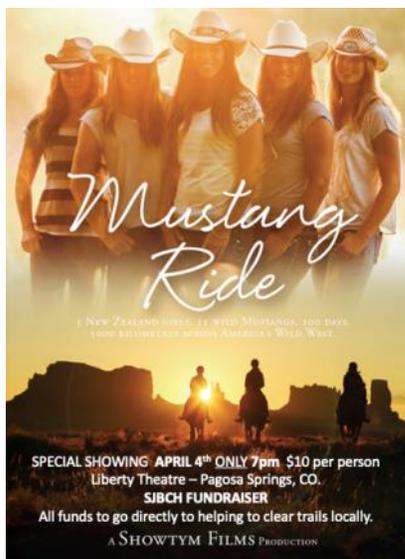
Welcome to the first edition of the revived SJBCH newsletter. A huge thanks to Lisa Nelson for getting this off the ground. As you all probably know, Lisa wears many hats around our chapter and agreed to put this one on for a short time until we can identify another member to swap hats with her. So, any-

one looking for a way to get involved, this is a great opportunity!

The past two years have gone by in a blur! However, one of the things that your board recognizes is that we struggle to communicate what's going on with our chapter. This chapter has accomplished several things in that time, and we fear that many of you are not

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'Mustang Ride' Fundraiser a Galloping Success



By Kristie Hefling and Annie Pack

Mustang Ride, our second documentary film fundraiser, will go down in the books as yet another successful fundraiser!

At a recent board meeting, the idea of new fundraising ideas to benefit our trail-clearing efforts was brought up. Gary Staplecamp mentioned that our SJBCH Chapter featured the movie *Unbranded* in our local Liberty Theatre a few years back, and it was very well received. Not to mention, it was "easy" fundraising at its best. It was decided that Kristie Hefling should coordinate another documentary viewing...of course Kristie wasn't at this meeting...it's always better that way! Needless to say, when approached, she was more than happy to coordinate all the details... with little to no coercion.

Tonya Lambert and myself offered to help Kristie. We three got together over breakfast to go over details and later previewed the movie *Mustang Ride* at Tonya's home. Kristie had gotten approval from the Wilson sisters to show their documentary. At that point, it was game on!

After board approval, with projected costs and profits, the date was set and we got to work.

Small and large posters were made and laminated to display at local businesses and neighborhood mail stations around town with two large ones at the Liberty

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- Bill McElhinney, Secretary
- Annie Pack, Treasurer
- Kristie Hefling
- Tara McElhinney
- Marybeth McAuley
- John Nelson
- Lisa Nelson
- Gary Staplecamp

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(President's Message cont'd.)

aware of those accomplishments, but worse, what's on our horizon and how you can get involved. This newsletter represents a new effort to communicate to all our chapter members as well as the other chapters within the larger Back Country Horsemen organization.

The past three years has seen an unbelievable crisis hit our trails in Pagosa land. The spruce beetle infestation has decimated the spruce population; the result is that those dead and dying trees are now falling on the trail system in unprecedented numbers. The Forest Service is planning on 9,000 trees or more to be on the ground obstructing passage this spring. In addition, this winter has seen numerous avalanches that could cause further trail obstructions that will complicate planning and budgets. The bottom line here is that backcountry travel with livestock could be difficult if even doable.

The men and women working in the Pagosa Ranger District have and are working as hard as they possibly can to keep the trails open and passable but have only been able to hold the line at clearing 50% of the trail miles in the district for the past two years. In addition, the Forest Service estimates that treefall will continue at this rate for the next five to seven years. So, what are we doing about it?

As most of you know, last year we partnered with the local outfitters and guides and the Pagosa Area Trail Council along with Big Game Forever to host a fundraising gala that raised \$26,000. This money was used to contract a private trail crew for four weeks. Another \$4,600 was raised via a unique tack sale that is now being dedicated toward grant funding. The net effect of this effort was that a total of 4,500 trees were removed from the trails last summer, including the 345 removed by SJBCH volunteers. You don't have to be a genius to see that numbers are working against us and fast! This past winter season, after a unanimous vote of the membership, the board petitioned Regional Forester Brian Ferebee to consider using an exemption to the Wilderness Act and deploying chainsaws as well as dedicating more resources to the

problem. We have been partially successful in that trail crew funding has been significantly increased this year, and trail crews will be supplemented with fire crews this coming season. In addition, the forest supervisors for both the San Juan and Rio Grande forests have asked for the chainsaw exemption. The exemption is now being evaluated by Mr. Ferebee and his staff in Denver. Your board will keep you posted on the outcome of this request, but in the meantime, there is work to be done and I ask you to ask yourself what you as an SJBCH member can do to help. Here are a few things to help you with your contemplation:

1. If you do not have a crosscut saw certification, get certified. We can help with that. The more the merrier when it comes to sawyers!
2. If you can manage a pack string, you can take a tremendous load off the Forest Service by volunteering to re-supply the trail crews. These crews go in with what they can carry on their backs. When the food runs out, they must come out for supplies. This supply turnaround ends up taking significant and critical time away from the work at hand.
3. Take a saddle saw or loppers with you when you go ride. Trail standards for livestock are 8 feet wide by 10 feet tall. Let your horse rest a bit while you brush back the trail for him or her or lop off those annoying low-hanging limbs that always manage to grab your hat!
4. Get involved with our fundraising or education committees. We are always looking for new ideas to raise funds or get the word out. Every little bit helps!
5. Tell your friends. Get them involved.

Mike Pluth, John and Lisa Nelson and I have been involved with the Forest Service 2019 planning and have made significant commitments around trails to be cleared. Once the plan is final, we will communicate it and, as always, be calling for volunteers to get out there and move the mountain!

I'll close by saying that I am proud of the chapter's accomplishments over the past three years. In case you didn't know, this chapter has put in more volunteer hours by more than double all the other trail user-members of the Pagosa Area Trail Council combined. Now that's something you can hang your hat on!

See you on the other side of the saw!



San Juan Back Country Horsemen joined other Forest Service partners, including outfitters and guides, the Pagosa Area Trails Council, Pagosa Trail Riders and San Juan Outdoor Club to meet on April 4 with the Pagosa Ranger District to discuss trail clearing plans. (Photo by Lisa Nelson)

(‘Mustang Ride’ cont.’d)

Theatre. Kristie worked her magic on the computer and did a super job with these posters.

Tonya had the wonderful idea of asking one of our members, Christian Pantin, to bring her Mustang Crow to the theater as a greeter and goodwill ambassador for all of our guests (and passers-by strolling about town). Wow, what a hit Christian and Crow were...you couldn’t help grinning from ear-to-ear to see the interaction with the people and reaction of people driving by to see Crow out in front of the Liberty Theatre—priceless! There were many questions asked of Christian regarding Mustang rescue services and many pictures taken of Crow with adoring fans.

Our event was advertised on our Facebook page with about 50 tickets sold in advance. In the end, of the 148 seats in the theater, there were only 20 seats left at the showing that evening.

We netted \$1,253.09 from the movie, which included \$350 in donations to the cowboy hats we had set up inside and outside the theater.

Tara McElhinney and Nancy Seay were a big help in front of the theater collecting donations and passing out info on memberships for SJBCH.

Inside the theater, we had info on the Mustang rescue program and more info on our group.

Last, but certainly not least, Rob Lambert delivered a short presentation to the entire theater audience that was quite captivating. He delivered our mission

as SJBCH volunteers and our efforts to clear trails and the issues we’re having in our wilderness areas in a very effective way. It most definitely resonated with audience. I know this for a fact, as we heard applause from moviegoers as they trailed out of theater. More questions were asked, and many hugs and words of thanks were given.

Thank you to our membership and our wonderful community for supporting this event. A big thank you to Phil and his staff at the Liberty Theatre. They were awesome!

Our SJBCH Chapter is planning two more movie fundraisers this summer...so stay tuned!



Christian Pantin and her Mustang Crow were a big hit at the movie. Looks like they both had a good time! (Photos by Tonya Lambert)

Chapter Revives Newsletter

By Lisa Nelson

After a long hiatus, we’re bringing back the chapter newsletter. Your SJBCH board wants to enhance communication with our members and our external audiences as well.

This revived newsletter tentatively is titled *Pony Tracks*. That’s the title of a book published by Frederic Remington in 1895 that captures life in the Old West in his writings and illustrations. He dedicated the book to those “who rode the ponies that made the tracks.”

But we’re not tied to the name. We’re inviting suggestions you have for a newsletter name. Send in a title you like, and we can take a vote at the next meeting.

We want you to think of this as *your* newsletter. We encourage you to submit stories, photos and ideas that you think would be of interest to our members and the community we serve. We want to hear your voices in this newsletter, so we will just be editing materials for style consistency, accuracy and space considerations.

In the near future, we plan to establish some regular deadlines for submissions and for publication.

As we reactivate the newsletter, we’d also like to thank Hugh and Jayne Jones for all their hard work in previous years producing the chapter newsletter.

Please send your thoughts, suggestions and ideas to me at lwnhorses@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events & Other News

SJBCH to Celebrate National Trails Day June 29 at Anderson Trail

By Lisa Nelson

San Juan BCH is planning a celebration of National Trails Day on June 29 with hands-on learning of trail tools and trail-clearing techniques at Anderson Trailhead. The event will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will include a cookout lunch.



Photo by Kelli Day

“If you’re interested in getting involved to help clear trails this year with our trail crews working in the Weminuche and South San Juan wildernesses, this will be a great introduction to get you started,” said SJBCH Trail Committee Chair John Nelson. “Although National Trails Day officially is June 1, we’re celebrating a little later in hopes of being able to access the first mile or so of Anderson Trail after our strong winter.”

The program will include safety instruction, introduction of various trail tools and their uses and on-the-trail practice using the tools along the first section of the trail. This likely be the first official trail project for SJBCH in 2019, and how appropriate that it will be on the chapter’s adopted trail. This is a non-horse event, although we may have a horse and rider (or two) for demonstration and packing supplies.

We will congregate at the horse trailer parking lot. Also, plan to arrive early enough, so we can get started promptly by 9 a.m.

The chapter will provide the fixings for the cookout, but everyone needs to be responsible for their own beverages, especially water. We’re looking for a few cooks, so let us know if that’s your interest.

Please be sure to wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and sturdy work boots. You also need to bring a hat, gloves and protective eyewear (such as sunglasses). We will provide hardhats.

It’s possible that folks from the Pagosa Ranger District may join us as well as some members of the San Juan Outdoor Club and Pagosa Area Trails Council.

We’ll send out more information as the date approaches.

Farm Bureau to Host Land and Animal Symposium

The Archuleta County Farm Bureau will host a land and animal symposium on Saturday, May 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Archuleta County Fairgrounds. Topics to be discussed include toxic plants and grazing, soil health and native species, water as a resource and tree health.

The keynote speaker will be Denny Behrens of BigGame Forever, a sportsmen’s advocacy group. He will talk about wolves and livestock at about 1:30 p.m.

There is no charge for the event, and lunch will be served.

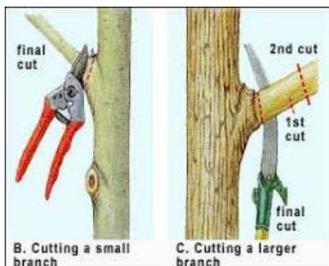


Chapter Seeks Brushing and Clearing Crew Leader

SJBCH is looking for a brushing and clearing crew leader for 2019 to help do an important part of the trails job that often doesn’t get done.

Have you ever been riding up one of our neat trails and you go through a section of trail that has bushes growing almost across the whole trail and your horse has to push through to move ahead? Or what about riding on a trail and you come across a section where small trees have grown up enough to where they snag your stirrups? “Brushing” or “clearing” our trail corridors to a standard width and height is an important part of trail maintenance, requiring people to use small folding saws, pruning shears and two-handled loppers. If you can’t or don’t want to work with a crosscut saw removing downed trees from the trail, how about leading a crew of two or more on our trails clearing and brushing? Great work in great locations!

Contact John Nelson at FtValleyPS@aol.com for details.



Upcoming Events & Other News (cont.'d)

Mark Your Calendars



May 18

SJBCH Social Ride

The first chapter social ride of the season at Kenny Flats

May 18

Western Heritage Event Center

Auction and fundraiser for the new pavilion

June 17

SJBCH BBQ

Chapter breakout barbecue at Fireside Inn.

BCH Members Make Strong Showing at CPR/First Aid Training



Photo by Kristie Hefling

Twenty-four members of Back Country Horsemen from Pagosa Springs, Durango, Bayfield and Cortez participated in CPR and First Aid courses on March 30, led by instructor Carl Macht (standing). BCH members completed the course in preparation for the next step of crosscut saw or chainsaw certification. Based on the great turnout, it appears there will be many sawyers helping to clear trails this season.

Colorado State Rendezvous Slated Aug. 16-18

The Back Country Horsemen of Colorado State Rendezvous will be Aug. 16-18 in the Gunnison National Forest at the Clear Fork Trailhead. Space is limited to the first 70 registrants.

Events include:

- a meet-and-greet on Friday evening with appetizers provided by Front Range Back Country Horsemen
- three catered meals (Saturday breakfast, dinner and Sunday breakfast)
- evening campfires and entertainment
- silent auction
- trail rides

The entry fee is \$75 for adults, \$30 for children ages 6-12, and children under 5 are free. There are no refunds after July 1. For more information, go to the Front Range Back Country Horsemen website at frbch.org.



Photo Courtesy Front Range BCH