



NorthWest Montana BCH Celebrates a Successful Third Year!

As we draw close to the close of a very successful third year as the newest BCH Chapter in Montana we reflect on some of our accomplishments.

The 4-H Packing program had another successful year with 19 4-H members participating. We had a slow start with all of the snow and icy roads in the spring but the kids were determined to show up, learn and perfect their packing skills. This year's shining star was Quindy Gronley, who completed her first volunteer packing trip on a SNOTEL project in August.



We received an RTP Grant for work on Trail 35 and Owl Creek Packer Camp. This project entailed blasting rock and rebuilding the trail at about the 4 mile marker from the trailhead. Montana Conservation Crew was engaged to build a retaining wall and prepare the site for the blasting as well as tread work to make the trail safer for stock users. This trailhead and trail gets more use than any other in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex so work here was a priority for our chapter.



We worked on other projects including a Project on Dean Creek in conjunction with Spotted Bear Ranger District, where we completed two resupplies for the MCC Crew. Packing support for Swan Lake Ranger District to replace the hitch rails at Upper Holland Lake. Our members packed in the Outhouse and a load of hay to Shaw Cabin for the Forest Service. We also participated in the Forestry Expo, an effort by the Forest Service and Stoltz Lumber to educate 5th Graders about the importance of the forest and all of its uses. We also participated in various trail clearing project as well as several Bob Marshall Wilderness projects proving much needed pack support.

Our chapter feels that to promote Back Country Horsemen it is extremely important that we are engaged with our community. Therefore we have attended and participated in multiple trail planning efforts in the Flathead Valley. New trails are being developed and others are being officially designated and we are there to insure that horses have access to any new systems that are developed. We are also serving on the Flathead County Trails Coalition who is charged with developing a plan for all trails within the Flathead County. Participation in community efforts gives us an opportunity to promote our chapter and BCH as a whole. This is an important part of looking to the future regarding trails, membership and promotion of BCH.

As our chapter continues to think outside the box, we have had an exemplary fundraising effort this year. The annual Scrabble Ride, held at Swisher Lake Trailhead by Eureka had over 100 riders and fun was had by all. Our spring Gun raffle was a huge success as well as we were fortunate

to be asked by the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks to manage their parking lot during the North West Montana Fair. The fall Gun Raffle is now in progress and will continue until our annual Christmas Party in December. All in all we have raised almost \$8,000.00 in 2017 with a huge possibility that the fall raffle will exceed our expectations.

This year's fire season has taken a devastating toll on our forests and trail system. We fully expect that the Forest Service will need additional help in the coming months to recover the trail systems affected by the fires. NorthWest Montana BCH stands ready to mobilize our membership to help with these needs.

On an ending note as this article was written we have lost one of our members, James Floyd lost his battle with cancer on September 2nd, we offer our support and prayers to his family.

