

**State Convention Meeting
Lewiston, Idaho April 12, 2008**

Raenette opened the meeting at 0830. The local Boy Scout Troop presented the flag ceremony. Roll call was made and the annual reports handed out. All chapters were present. Past Chairmen were introduced – all were at the meeting. Our organization submitted dues to the national for 842 members. It was noted that Val Johnson was here helping on Thursday and was on life flight to Spokane for a heart stint Thursday night (and yes they had the flight insurance). Val was released and back by Sat. afternoon!!

Mark Bogar noted this is the 3rd year for the show and it has helped us become financially solvent as an organization, which should allow us to grow. He reviewed the various vendors and competitions to attend.

Peter Stegner, from Senator Crapo's office spoke to the group on Senate Bill 2283 - Preserving our Equine Heritage. The bill is currently in committee with no movement. The Senator is very supportive of this Act and wanted to thank us for our volunteer work on federal lands. When this was first introduced, there was no democratic co-sponsor, which it needs. They have worked with Senator Cantwell, with moderate success, but may look at teaming up with Senator Tester of Montana to help it move forward. Senator Tester is on the same committee. They are looking for specific example of why/where this Act is needed. Steve asked what is the most effective way to contact our legislature – email, phone, letters, form letters. Peter said it was best to contact the local staffer via phone or visit. Since 9/11, it takes forever for a letter to get through the DC office due to security. Question asked at what point do you have enough phone calls or contacts to make an issue rise to the top. Peter said when they get 15-20 constituents calling, it raises the level. When you contact as a group, they understand it has a large organization behind it. Phil Foster pointed out that we don't have direct closures to equine in Idaho, as much as agencies are pressured by environmental groups not to replace bridges that have failed or washed out and only use fords. This would preclude all access during high water. There is also a lack of maintenance on trails. Question asked about being on an email list to get equine information. You can get their newsletter & press releases, but it would not be specific to equines. Don McPherson noted that he has sent numerous letters and never got acknowledgement they were received. Peter apologized and said all comments should be responded to.

Recreation User Fee Repeal Legislation – Steve Didier

We were asked by another group to support repealing the user fee act. In Idaho – we have success with these fees going back to the area they were collected, but in others states they have not had the same success. When Fee Demo started, over a decade ago, BCH chose to come out in opposition to it. It was not denying the need in places, but that it would become an entitlement program. The last report was that in 50% of the areas, 62% of the fees went back to something other than what they collected for. There are certain sections in the Act where it specifically said fees would not be assessed for access to ride or travel through areas, picnicking, parking along side the road, nor assessed in areas unless the agency had significant investment, such as campgrounds with bathrooms, etc. In CO last year a lady was ticketed for parking along the road and having a picnic..she won in court. These kinds of

examples are what are causing the repeal act. There are several forests in the east that enacted fees at trailheads for equestrian use only. In the 3 forests (Shawnee, Hoosier, and Chatahoochie/Ocono) there are few equestrian users compared to hikers, but they are singled out. Steve also discussed areas where fees have helped the FS maintain its areas. Region 1 is noted for its ability in putting these dollars back on the ground where they were collected. Region 4 is probably 2nd, other than a few select areas like the Payette River. So BCHA is opposing the fees. Question asked whether there will be money from Congress back to the agency to replace the money taken away from the fee demo. If it is a line item – yes, but if it is not a line item, then no. The National Park Service is excluded from the proposed Act.

Public lands information – the access fee is the big one, and Peter already covered the Historic Use Act. Another item that happens more back east, but has potential in WA and OR is the denial of equestrian use on state lands. One thing BCH has never done is mount a campaign against another user, but International Mountain Biking Ass (IMBA) has done that to us very successfully. In parts of CO it appears that IMBA has put together the management plans that deny access to users. BCHA is trying to get on top of this issue. It isn't clear why they are attacking us. There was a study done by someone that slams equestrian use and since he has the letters behind his name, IMBA is using his study. One study in the Midwest and east showed that weed spread was not occurring along the trail due to manure because growing conditions were not adequate. But IMBA uses a different study to prove that in the lab, they could grow weeds from manure...under best conditions. The problem is the national leadership for IMBA, and not the local groups that sometimes have good working relationships with BCH.

Trail classifications – the meeting got nixed by the fires last year. It should happen this spring, but they discovered that some forests were implementing trail management objectives already. We were assured this would not be done without NEPA, so BCHA has sent a letter to the associate chief. It was noted that there is discussion about changing the status of horses from livestock to a companion animal, and that would not be good. (California is trying to do it.) Steve said this comes up every few years in CA. Rhode Island classifies that horses are ATV's. Most of us have been against the animal identification database which states that our equines are livestock – so there is some benefit to that.

The Scariest Thing You Might See On a Trail.

A bicycle rider entered the building! Scott Jackson has a bike dealership in Lewiston and a booth here at the show. He noted that they actually have a lot of fear of equines. One reason is they have not discussed with each other what to do when they meet. And part of the concern is the fact that they like to go fast, leave the ground and use jumps, etc. He was recently educated to the fact that horses don't like you above them, which is where he would usually go up the hill to stop easier. He notes that they like "clean" trails with no rocks, etc for increased speed. Question asked how can we hear you coming so we can prepare for the bicycles? Can you put something on the bike? It was suggested that bicyclists talk to the horses as horses understand human voice. It was suggested that if you are riding uphill and want to keep your momentum, holler ahead that bikers are going by and horses can step aside. If bicyclists need to dismount, give them time to adjust to their legs for walking instead of biking – be patient. Let people know if there are more coming – bikers or horses. Question asked about education and training between user groups with Scott? He said they never had

an established club to do this, but it is just starting up. We should go and talk to the bike shops, especially the repair person who talks with the new bike owner about trails; get the etiquette info to them so they can share it. BCH could develop a poster to be put up in bike shops with some information. The bicycle groups aren't as organized as BCH. Marilyn said she would work with Scott and get information out. Question asked how can we make the bikers more comfortable on the trail. When they are on top of a trail and looking at the descent... maybe there are situations where there could be a passing lane to allow the bicycles to maintain their speed. They don't complain about horse manure any more, because they moved the water bottle location to the top and it doesn't get manure flung over the bottle. It was suggested BCHers could kick the manure off the first ½ miles of trails pretty easy. Other than wilderness, do they have access issues? Yes they do and they could use our voice as much as we can use theirs. He would like to see folks working together to keep trails open. They are a young group – the first mountain bike was built 26 years ago. They are losing trail access on state land and being told they scare wildlife.

Jack Lamb had the foundation report – same report as yesterday.

Broomtales: Marilyn Rousher is doing an article for Broomtales next issue on people who ride mules. She would like names and emails from folks so she can ask questions and get photos, etc.

Life flight: Phil Ryan.

This has worked out well – some chapters bought blocks on their own, and BCHI handled chapters that did not buy the 100 memberships. There were some issues dealing with wrong addresses or phone numbers, but expect fewer problems next year. This year, there were no slots for new members to join in, so next year chapters may want to buy extra slots for new members. Some chapters raised their dues by \$6 and have automatic membership in the life flight. (Phil noted that any emails actually come from his wonderful wife Kay!) The state did not lose a dime – we have 400 memberships. Life Flight can land anywhere in an emergency situation, including wilderness and need 50 feet square in daylight and 75 feet square at night. They need to find you – use a GPS. You may need satellite phones to get out in some areas. This covers the difference between what your insurance covers and the rest of the flight cost.

BCHI.org website has not been working since last year. Connie Glass designed the site and has kept it up, but it is now corrupted and she is unable to fix it. She will step down and the board of directors has tasked a new person to get the web site back up. Raenette got a plaque for Connie for all the work she has done to be presented by PBCH.

Delegate votes:

The bylaw change for BHCI passed by unanimous vote.

Calendar proposal: A question was asked whether delegates should vote yes when their chapter said no. Past chairs said there is a fiduciary responsibility for the financial security of the state organization and they can choose as they wish. BCHI will not tell them how to vote. The calendar proposal passed by 48 yes to 15 no.

Convention proposal passed by 48 yes, 14 no and 1 neutral. The date for the November convention in Salmon will be Saturday, November 15, and the board meeting will be Friday, November 14.

National Director proposals. Val and Rod Parks will go to the meeting. Bernie reviewed the proposals that will come up there. One will be by-law changes that were somewhat benign, but necessary. The California proposal was opposed by BCHI. There is a proposal for an opposition resolution to the animal identification. There is a Wyoming proposal to require standing committee chairs to be appointed from National Directors (e.g. Steve Didier is a standing committee chair, but not a member of the board now). BCHI opposed this one. Illinois had a proposal to words repeal the RAT tax.

Raenette asked for volunteers to step up and take the state secretary task. See her if you are interested. Their travel costs will be covered by the state.

Convention adjourned.