

Presidential Ponderings

By Ellen Knapp

The other day, I was reading an article in our BCHA Winter 2009 newsletter about a work project last year performed by the Cloud Peak Chapter of BCH Wyoming. It reminded me of some of the projects SBBCH performed a few years back where we packed in trail crews and came back at a later date to pack them out. What struck me about the article was that, as far as I could tell, none of the BCH packers were women. The article listed the names of the rider/packers and while 'Marty' and 'Jerry' could very well be names of women, I doubt it. Now, I wasn't deliberately looking for women's names as I read the list of participants. I simply read through the list out of curiosity. It was a few minutes later that I realized it was men that packed in and packed out the crews. So I stopped to think about our own chapter. Which women pack in our chapter? I only know of a handful. That got me wondering "why". Unfortunately, I don't have the answer to this question. I certainly would welcome some input from the women in our chapter as to why more of you don't pack. I'm thinking there are some things SBBCH has missed and has taken for granted. I believe SBBCH has an opportunity here.

I welcome all our new SBBCH members and say welcome back to all of our returning SBBCH members. We have a full schedule of events, activities and work weekends lined up for 2009. We need all of our members to participate so we can achieve all of our commitments. While we do have fun rides, the core purpose of our organization is service. We work to maintain access to trails and trail heads. But we are a volunteer organization; we don't kill ourselves in pursuit of this work. And we have lots of fun and fabulous food while performing the work. Food is a core value of our chapter and figures prominently in our work weekends. We make work a social event. Work weekends are a great way to get to know the various SBBCH folks. Our monthly meetings are filled with lots of information, but are not a great way to get to know SBBCH and its members.

So just what are the work weekends like and what are they NOT like?

- Work weekends are NOT marathon work events. We hit the saddle Saturday after a very filling communal breakfast. We stop for lunch. We try to be back in camp about 4:30 in the afternoon. Sunday is usually a fun ride in the same general area.
- Everyone is NOT required to have pack stock. We usually have a few tools, a couple of chainsaws, and fuel to pack along and only need a few animals to tote it.
- Everyone does NOT need to run the chainsaws. There is plenty to do lopping out the overgrowth, removing cut logs, and holding horses. If you have a bad back, bad hips, bad knees, or bad whatever, stay in the saddle. But do come and ride with us.
- The trails are NOT for ONLY experienced horses and riders. Most trails are suitable for novice horses and riders and riding the trails with the SBBCH folks will increase you and your mount's experience and confidence. SBBCH folks observe trail etiquette guidelines. We ensure every one is in the saddle before moving off, we wait to make

sure everyone has crossed the bridge or water, we keep tabs on the slower riders and wait for them to catch up.

- SBBCH DOES try to make it easy for our members to attend the work weekends. SBBCH provides the certified hay. Trail head directions are available on our web site. Trailer sharing and trailer caravanning is available. SBBCH members are willing to help others learn to camp with their horses and often have excess equipment, like a highline, to lend. SBBCH sets up a communal kitchen, Saturday and Sunday breakfast is communal and Saturday dinner is pot luck.

I look forward to seeing familiar faces and new faces this year at our rides, events and work weekends. I look forward to getting to know each of you better.