



Back Country Horsemen of America

Working to keep trails open on public lands.

Back Country Horsemen of America E-Blast

April 7, 2014

Action Alert:

Deadline for Comments: April 24, 2014 (midnight Mountain time zone)

Proposed Rule Change for Private Horse Use –Bryce Canyon National Park

Dear BCHA members,

Bryce Canyon National Park has proposed changes for users of privately-owned stock on designated horse trails within the park. The changes are intended to ensure the safety of all visitors and to protect park resources. The park initiated a public comment period on the proposed changes for 30 days beginning March 26, 2014.

The changes proposed by Bryce Canyon National Park include a requirement that all horseback riding must be coordinated with the park's authorized trail-ride concessioner, prior to entering the park. Of concern, however, is that private stock users also would be required to pay a substantial fee to the park's concessioner to guide and accompany all privately-owned stock riding groups for the duration of their trip over any portion of the eight miles of park trails available for stock use.

The fee that would be charged by the concessioner for this service would be based on the number of riders, up to eight riders per guide. The proposed fee schedule would range from \$100 for the first rider to \$345 for eight riders.

For more information, view the Park's website here:

<http://www.nps.gov/brca/parknews/proposed-rule-change-for-private-horse-use.htm>

If approved, the proposed changes would represent a new and disturbing precedent among National Parks to require all private stock users to hire a commercial guide. We are not aware of any National Park where such a requirement currently exists. Nor does BCHA want to see this precedent established at Bryce Canyon. In order to adequately resolve concerns regarding visitor safety, we believe that alternative measures can be taken that emphasize rider education, resource protection, and the role of law enforcement in dealing with rogue riders who choose to violate the rules.

The public is encouraged to submit comments by May 24, 2014, via email to the following address: brca_information@nps.gov, or mail your comments to: Program Analyst, Bryce Canyon National Park, P.O. Box 640201, Bryce, Utah 84764

BCHA's Advisor for Wilderness & Recreation is coordinating the public comment effort with BCH Utah's Officer for Public Lands. They recommend you consider including some or all of the following talking points in your comments to Bryce Canyon National Park.

Remember, "Cool heads prevail." It's important to be courteous, to make constructive recommendations that address the safety problem and, importantly, to demonstrate your passion and knowledge by adding your personal story among these talking points:

- I am writing about the Proposed Rule Change for Private Horse Use.
- As a private user of recreational stock, I recognize the importance of minimizing safety hazards and resource damage on our public lands.

- I appreciate the Park Superintendent's announcement of a 30-day comment period on the matter. By doing so, he recognized the high level of public interest and desire of visitors who use their horses and mules to enjoy the beauty and splendor of Bryce Canyon and other National Parks.
- I understand that portions of the trails at Bryce Canyon are unusually narrow and steep. This is why horse trails at the park are designated "one-way," in order to minimize the potential for parties on horseback to pass each other along segments of trail where it is dangerous to do so.
- I understand that additional measures are needed to avoid private and commercially-guided parties from converging at those sections of trail where there is high safety risk.
- I do not, however, support the park's current proposal that all private stock parties be required to hire the services of a commercial guide.
- Instead, I understand the Park Superintendent is open to constructive comments that would help alleviate the safety situation and ensure that riders stay on designated trails and not damage park resources.
- In addition to the currently required 48-hour advance check-in by private stock users, I recommend the park adopt an alternative that would restrict the time(s) of day a private party be allowed to traverse sections of trail where there is high safety risk, in order to allow commercially-guided trips safe passage.
- I understand the need to minimize damage to off-trail soils and cultural resources.
- I recommend that private stock parties be required to check in--prior to riding in the park--both to coordinate departure/itinerary logistics regarding rider safety and to receive a briefing from either park or commercial outfitter personnel. The briefing could be used to convey regulations pertaining to use of park trails, including prohibitions on off-trail travel, cutting of switchbacks and riding parallel or side-by-side on designated trails where the trail tread is narrow.
- I do not object to paying a modest fee to cover agency and/or commercial outfitter costs associated with the recommended pre-departure briefing for private stock parties.
- I encourage the Park Service to explore methods by which NPS law enforcement personnel can more readily identify and make contact with stock users who do not follow the rules. These methods should emphasize streamlined communication with park volunteers and the stock concession operator to report violations in a timely manner.
- I understand that Back Country Horsemen of Utah (BCHU) has volunteered to assist the Park Service in developing a curriculum of the pre-trip training for private stock users. They have several Master Trainers versed in Leave No Trace techniques, and the Park Service would benefit from cultivating closer relations with BCHU and enlisting their assistance.
- I appreciate this opportunity to provide public comment.

- Thank you for your effort to make the unique trail experience offered at Bryce Canyon safe and affordable for everyone. I look forward to my next visit to Bryce Canyon National Park.

BCHA: Working to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.

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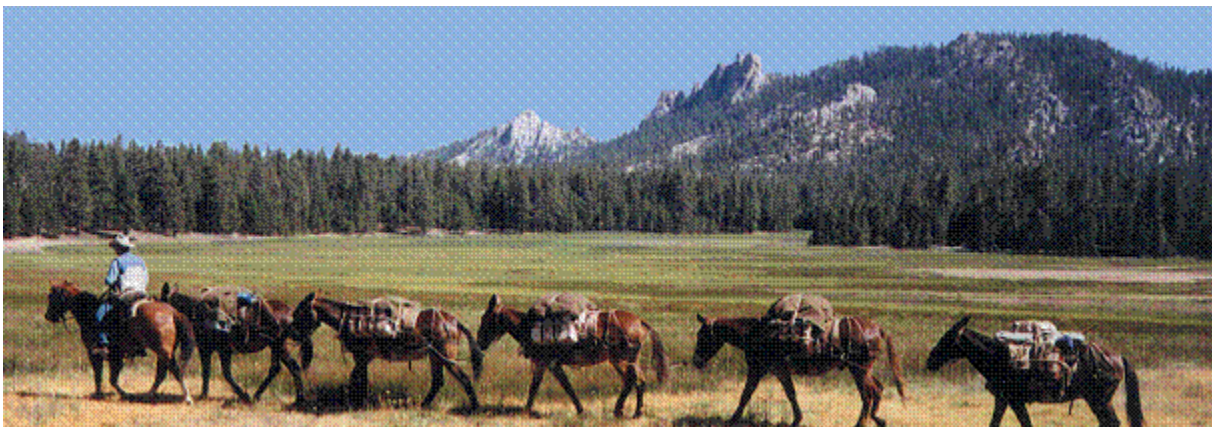
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Don't forget to **Like** us on Facebook.com at: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/bcha.org>. We have had to date 2,260 likes on our Facebook page. It is a good place to post your chapter, affiliates and at-large members to post updates and information on accomplishments and upcoming events and work days.

About Back Country Horsemen of America

BCHA is a non-profit corporation made up of state organizations, affiliates, and at large members. Their efforts have brought about positive changes in regards to the use of horses and stock in the wilderness and public lands.

If you want to know more about Back Country Horsemen of America or become a member, visit our website: www.backcountryhorse.com, call 888-893-5161, or write PO Box 1367, Graham, WA 98338-1367. The future of horse use on public lands is in our hands!



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