



Dedicated to Keeping Trails Open for All

Pony Tracks

The San Juan Back Country Horsemen newsletter

October 2023

President's Message



John Nelson

The fall colors have been fantastic, and I hope you're enjoying them! Our chapter has stayed busy as you'll see in this newsletter, and there's still some great fall riding ahead of us yet this year before winter arrives. And good luck to our outfitter and guide partners.

Something I've been thinking about is how tough it can be to drive on our roads and highways these days with lots of traffic, road construction and people driving at high speeds, tailgating and doing dangerous and dumb things. I hope each of us is careful out there, especially when we're hauling our horses. Please drive defensively, anticipate the drivers around you and

don't let bad drivers get to you. And like an old timer told me many years ago, haul your horses as if Grandma is in the back with the horses—slow down, especially when braking and turning corners. Take your time, anticipate bad drivers and enjoy this neat fall we have going. Hope to see you at the chapter Christmas party on Dec. 11!

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A Beautiful Day for the Oct. 7 Color Ride



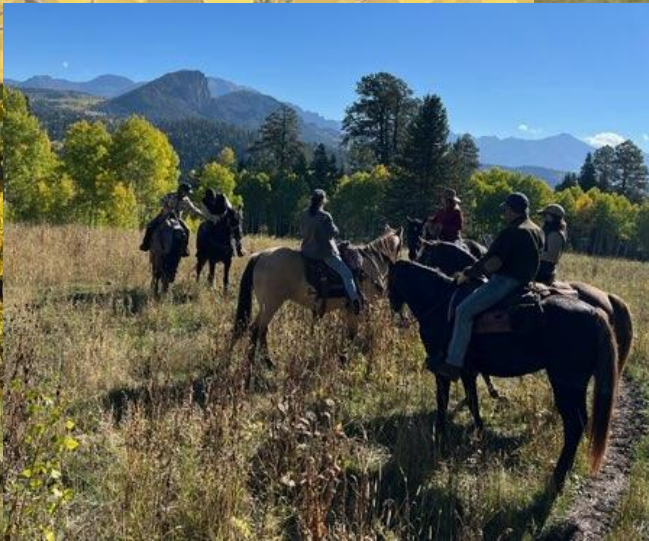
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There will not be an SJBCH general meeting in November. We wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving!

Be sure to mark your calendars for the festive **SJBCH Christmas Party December 11** at the Timber Ridge Clubhouse.

(Fall Color Ride cont.'d)



Photos Courtesy Annie Pack

SJMA and SJBCH — A Partnership in the Making

By Annie Pack

Our guest speaker this month was Stephanie Weber, executive director of the [San Juan Mountains Association](#), and all I can say is “wow”—what a dynamo she is! I can't begin to tell you how her infectious enthusiasm lit up the room. It's not often that you meet someone who is so passionate about their job, but I can assure you, she is.

Lucky for our chapter (and a few others), she is working for the same goals as we are—clearing trails and educating the public to name a few. She grew up in the Durango area and started riding at age 10. She loves horses and mentioned that she would love to ride with us here in Pagosa. She is well aware of the work our chapter has done and continues to do. Protecting the environment is a big part of her job. Prior to her current job, she worked in California in science conservation with government agencies. She was on Capitol Hill as a lobbyist and in Virginia working as director of Climate Change Advocate. Her heartstrings were pulling at her when she applied for her current job that would ultimately bring her “home.”

Here are the three topics SJMA focuses on:

Explore — Provide information to the public on where to go and what they can do.

Learn — Promote understanding of the environment. They have actually set up home school programs teaching the youngest minds!

Protect — Offer stewardships with Great Outdoors Colorado. Seasonal employees range in age from 15-50.

They have a team of Forest Ambassadors—hikers who cover 41 trails, including East and West Fork trails. They are there to educate and answer questions for those folks out there they engage. In addition, they have a wilderness crew of six people who, in a three-month period, covered 325 miles of trails and cleared 2600 trees. Wow!

SJMA also has Snow Ambassadors who educate folks in winter months. They like to think of this work they do as a “preventive” to Search and Rescue. In addition, they offer summer camps in Silverton.

Stephanie mentioned the idea of starting up the old Ghost Riders program again to get mounted volunteers out on trails to help inform and educate the public. She said the new name might not be Ghost Riders, but the program



It was a small group at the SJBCH October general meeting, but very enlightening and exciting with guest speaker Stephanie Weber, executive director of the San Juan Mountains Association. SJBCH President John Nelson takes a selfie of (standing, from left) new member David Woods, soon-to-be member Brenda Solly, Weber, Annie Pack, Rob Lambert (SJBCH member and also SJMA board member) and Lisa Nelson.

would be the same. We told her we think our members will be interested in this, having done it previously. SJBCH president John Nelson told her we appreciate her desire to get stock-using volunteers more involved. We discussed additional opportunities for our two groups to partner more in the future, including applying for grant funding for much-needed trail tread work on the Pagosa Ranger District, and for safety reasons and so we don't lose any more trails. SJBCH is currently partnering with SJMA in applying for a Colorado Parks and Wildlife grant in 2024 for work on 17 trails on the Divide Ranger District of the

Rio Grande National Forest. SJBCH has agreed to provide \$5,000 cash to help meet cash-match needs for the \$80,000 grant.

The San Juan Mountain Association has it going on for sure, and as we chatted with her, it was easy to see how our groups complement each other. I feel certain we will be meeting some of her team and coming across them as we explore the wonders of our mountains.

San Juan Mountains Association would welcome help from SJBCH with their annual Christmas Trees for Conservation fundraiser in Durango in November. They are seeking folks with horse trailers or flatbed trailers who can help transport the trees on Nov. 18 from the cutting area at Beaver Meadows to their sale lot at the train parking lot in Durango. Click [here](#) for more info.

Your Chapter Needs You!

Our chapter of Back Country Horsemen of America is healthy and doing well, and we look for that to continue and grow in the future to help ensure we have stock access on our public lands and that those lands are in good shape—that is the mission of BCHA. After our September elections, we once again have a strong board of directors who are active and steering us in the right direction. There are a few important volunteer job vacancies, though, and if we find the right members to fill them, we can do even better. If you'd like to get involved, please know you are welcome and that there's always something to do, whether you have an hour a week or can contribute more. And if you take on some of the chapter's work, you won't be alone. Our members work together and help each other out when needed. We'll help train you, too. Our partnership with the U.S. Forest Service in our work is key. Here are some current 'job openings' we have for continuing this work.

Fundraising Committee Chair—Part of the solution for the chapter to meet the national mission of BCHA is for us to raise money so we can use our 501(c)(3) non-profit status to apply for grants and thereby support much-needed work by crews and contractors in the backcountry. While the joint efforts of several different groups over the past 10 years have helped get a lot of beetle-killed dead trees off our trails, critical tread work on trails has lapsed badly, and we're losing trails due to a lack of maintenance. Some trails are being closed for safety and resource deterioration reasons, and once they're gone, they're gone for good. Campsites in the backcountry need maintenance for us all to have good places to go when we get there. Raising funds to get this work done is important, and the person doing this job can pull his/her committee together, seek local donations from businesses (which has helped us immensely in the past) and also attain state and national grants for trail and backcountry work, which we've also done with success on several trails in the area. The person doing this job can put however much time and effort into it as they can spare, and the board, with people who have experience in these things, can help you get started.

Pony Tracks newsletter assistant editor and contributors—Current editor Lisa Nelson would be happy to work with someone who would like to



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inner writer and/or shutterbug!

Social Committee Chair—It's not all work for the chapter. Social activities are important and are a great opportunity for members to meet and get together, relax and enjoy each other's company. Our Social Committee chair helps plan our general meetings, including setting up speakers and potlucks. The chair plans our spring Breakout Party, the Fall Color Ride, the Christmas party, and social rides.

Most of this is at the chair's discretion in terms of the number of events and with a committee of several people to help. The idea is to have fun without making this job too big. Annie Pack, our current chair, has done a fantastic job, but she must take a little break, although she'll still help as she can. And as with other work we do, there are always members extending a helping hand.



Sign Committee Chair—Helping take care of the forest is part of our BCH mission, and we always say that the signs people see as they enter and travel in the forest need to be in good shape. If not, and if people see signs in poor condition, then they think no one cares, and they may not take care of the forest themselves. We partner with the U.S. Forest Service in all our work, including helping to maintain signs. Scraping and painting a sign can take place on sunny days in the field, or signs may be

eventually assume the role of editor and perhaps take the newsletter to the next level (maybe an online/web-based newsletter). And we're always looking for submissions of photos and articles to the chapter newsletter. Tap into your

(Your Chapter Needs You cont.'d)



removed and taken to a garage to be maintained. The chapter buys the FS standard color paints and materials. It is very rewarding to see well maintained signs

out in the forest, such as the Coyote Hill forest entrance sign on Piedra Road—looks great! And there is no target number of signs to do—a few or a lot. You can do this work as your time and interest allows, bring a committee or crew together and have fun.

If any of this volunteer work interests you, please contact John Nelson at ftvalleyps@aol.com or 928-853-0348. We look forward to working with you!

SJBCHers Welcome New Equine Family Members



The Betts family recently acquired four mules who have spent much of their lives together. At left, Jenavieve Betts tests out Arlo at various gaits. Center (from left), Randy Betts rides Leroy, neighborhood friend Bianca sits atop Missy and Katie Betts leads with Roxy. At right, Randy enjoys some bonding time with Leroy. (Photos by Kelli Day)



Annie Pack is thrilled with the new addition to her family—Huey the Haflinger. A former buggy horse, Annie is working on riding and reining with her new boy, who has a couple of unique talents. He can bow on command and also will retrieve anything Annie drops in the corral.

Looking Back



Civilian Conservation Corps woodcutters circa mid-1930s



1944 Montana at Grant-Kohrs Ranch

Thank You to Our Generous 2023 Donors

Burris and Sons
Bucking Bulls and Rodeo

John and Jane Mancuso

Julie and Greg McCallum

Tim and Cindy Plate

Ash and Trish Tully

Laurie and Dieter Volk

Your Board of Directors

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Ron Toland, Vice President and Trails Lead

Katie Betts, Secretary

Allan Netzer, Treasurer

Randy Betts, Ex-Officio Member

Kelli Day, Ex-Officio member

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Janie Gray, Membership Coordinator

Lisa Nelson, Communications Lead

Annie Pack, Social Committee Lead

Dick Ray, Outfitter and Guide Liaison

Jo Ann Senzig, Rodeo Committee Lead

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