

HISTORY OF BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN OF WASHINGTON

ONE MAN MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The history of Backcountry Horsemen of Washington (BCHW) began with one man: Ken Wilcox. Ken didn't dream a dream. He didn't see a vision. Ken just heard of a need, and went out to meet it. He stepped out, trusting others would join to make the difference. He was right. We have, and we still are!

In 1968, a hiker acquaintance, Louise Marshal, called Ken, then a member of the Washington State Horsemen (WSH), to inform him of a Forest Service meeting regarding trails and backcountry recreation. Ken went and realized that no one was representing horsemen! WSH appointed Ken to represent horsemen. For better representation, he took some Traildusters Saddle Club members to the meeting at the Seattle Center. By 1972, Ken was elected Trails Director of WSH. He recruited trail riders for the Trail Division. He submitted articles to the WSH monthly paper, Canter. Soon it became apparent that trail riding horsemen needed an organization dedicated solely to preserving the rights of people to use horses and mules for recreation on public lands. So, in 1976 a new organization of trail riders was formed. Also in 1976, a new horsemen's organization called Backcountry Horsemen of America had formed in Montana and Idaho. Since objectives were the same, the new organization was called Backcountry Horsemen of Washington.

With the help of his wife, Carol Wilcox, and many friends, you and I enjoy the reality of back country recreational horse trails throughout the beautiful state of Washington. Carol stayed home to do the many chores, while Ken went to meetings with Forest Service representatives. It took time and energy. It paid off then, and still does today. BCHW continues this effort for tomorrow's generation. Any land use meeting given by the Department of Natural Resources, the Forest Service or Park Service has representation by a local BCHW chapter. There is power in a united focus.

ALDER CREEK HORSE CAMP 1972

Cascade Riders and Traildusters in co-operation with the Forest Service completed this first work project.

SAND FLATS HORSE CAMP 1972

The Meridian Riders and the Boeing Saddle Club cooperated with the Forest Service to establish this camp near Crystal Mountain, formerly known as Norse Peak Camp.

LOST MEADOW 1977

On July 9th-10th, BCHW held their first summer meeting and ride on the Little Naches drainage in Yakima County. It was also a garbage packout!

ALDERWOOD MANOR YOUTH CLUB 1977

On November 19th, the first winter meeting was held in Lynnwood.

Incorporation papers were filed.

WASHINGTON'S OCEAN BEACHES 1977

Trails were established from the uplands. This came about by presenting signed petitions at a public hearing that revised WAC (Washington Administrative Code) separating vehicle use from horse use. Ken started the paperwork in 1978, and it became a reality in 1979.

GOAT ROCKS WILDERNESS 1977

A Forest Service proposal to close a loop trail for horse use was stopped.

SAMMAMISH RIVER TRAIL 1978

Work started on fencing, next comes the trail. Hitch rails installed by 1980.

STUDEBAKER HORSE CAMP 1978

KEN WILCOX HORSE CAMP AT HANEY MEADOW 1979

In 1977 talks started about enlarging the camping area. In 1979 co-operative meetings with the Wenatchee National Forest Recreation staff began for developing the area for horse use. In 1982 the Ellensburg and Cle Elum Ranger District merged, and talks started over from scratch regarding horse camp planning. By 1983 trails were being expanded and in 1984 toilets installed. By 1985 the long struggle became reality. The Forest Service lined up a timber contractor to put in the road necessary to begin the work to develop the horse camp. Work continues to the present with many chapters coming together. Dedication held in 1992 In 1996 the name was changed to the Ken Wilcox Horse Camp.

BLACK PINE HORSE CAMP 1977-79

In the Icicle River drainage.

SALMON LA SAC 1977-79

Dedication in 1980. The YCC and YACC crews helped build this camp.

WHITE PASS 1977-79

Came about after starting with letter writings and meetings with the Forest Service Chief's office in Washington, DC. The Meridian Riders helped with the formation of this area.

CAPITOL FOREST 1979

Meetings with trailbike users proved fruitful. A unanimous request was made to DNR to rebuild unsafe ORV trails for safe horse use and to build new trails for both bike and horse use. DNR agreed.

JOHN WAYNE PIONEER TRAIL 1980's

Legislative friends in Olympia in 1979-80 maneuvered at the last minute and managed to get an acquisition price tacked on to a general money bill for the state to buy the Right of Way when the Milwaukee Railway announced it was abandoning its cross state rail line. Fighting off moves to stop the R/W being used as a trail followed until 1982. Chic Hollenbeck organized the first ride in 1982. 1983 brought more legislation. By 1984 the trail went from Easton to Idaho, with some gaps. The name change from the Milwaukee RR is credited to Paul Hart Sr., who personally called the John Wayne family for permission to use the John Wayne name.

ELBE HILLS HORSE CAMP 1980's

Pierce County Chapter, D.N.R., and other interested horsemen met, and built the existing trails and camp, located east of Eatonville. Today, the Pierce County Chapter continues to improve trails and clean up dump areas in the vicinity.

TWISP RIVER HORSECAMP 1987

Methow Chapter says it will happen this year! Meetings, letters, and phone calls with the Forest Service pays off! The dedication was held in 1988.

LES HILDE TRAILHEAD 1980's

From 1975 through 1990 efforts by the Sedro Woolley area horsemen payed off in the development of the trailhead and trail in the Harry Osborne State Forest. In 1985 the Skagit Chapter held the dedication, noting Les Hilde and Mack Johnson as tireless workers for this project. Maintaining and expanding the trail system is an on going project.

MT. SPOKANE STATE PARK 1980's

RIVERSIDE STATE PARK

COLVILLE NATIONAL FOREST

Inland Empire Chapter is involved in the building and maintenance of these areas.

PENINSULA AREA TRAILS 1980's

The Peninsula Chapter works with the Park Service and DNR on trails, trailhead work, trail building and maintenance.

FORT LEWIS 1980's

CAPITOL FOREST

KEENES HORSE CAMP

Capitol Riders Chapter oversees these areas today. Keenes was renovated in 1979.

KLICKITAT TRAIL 1980'S

Thunder Mountain and Lewis County pooled resources to open up this abandoned Indian trail. Together they also are rebuilding trails in the Packwood and Randle Ranger Districts. Lewis County entered into an agreement with a private timber company to build trails on their land.

WAPALOOSIE TRAILHEAD 1980's

Kettle Ridge Riders developed this trailhead on Kettle Ridge.

JUNIPER DUNES WILDERNESS AREA 1980's

Rattlesnake Ridge Riders received a national award in recognition of their working with BLM (Bureau of Land Management) in removing miles of old barbwire fencing. This chapter also works with the Pomeroy Ranger District on trails, and does projects in the Tri Cities area.

TIGER MOUNTAIN 1980's

SAND FLAT HORSE CAMP

The Tahoma Chapter is busy with the above areas in addition to the White River Ranger District and the Norsepeak Wilderness areas, (clean-up).

TIFFANY & BONAPART LAKE AREA 1980's

Okanogan chapter oversees these trails.

CADY RIDGE TRAIL 1980's

Traildusters and the Forest Service maintain the trail located along the north fork of the Skykomish River. Installation of wilderness toilet was completed in 1999.

DEVA HORSE CAMP 1980's

Whatcom Chapter with DNR handles the Chuckanut area and Deva Horse Camp and trail system to tie in with the Pacific Northwest Trail.

SUIATTLE 1989

The Forest Service recognized our value! They initiated a request for help to repair the Canyon Creek Bridge on the Suiattle out of Darrington in the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area. 50 pack horse loads of timbers were supplied by Gene Gilbert, Mack Johnson and Don Parrish. Helpers were recruited from Whatcom, Skagit, Pierce County and Traildusters.

ROCK CREEK 1989

Talks began back in 1977. Meetings followed. Then the physical labor began. Dedication held in 1993, for this camp up the Chiwawa.

NICHOLSON HORSE CAMP 1990

Pierce County begins working on DNR land for a trail system. The whole project was 5 years in the works from the first talks, to meetings, to building, with the dedication in 1993.

KALAMA HORSE CAMP 1991

This camp located in SW Washington was dedicated in 1993.

BROWNS CREEK HORSE CAMP 1992

The Olympic chapter in cooperation with the Forest Service constructed this camp back in the 1980's.

LEBAR HORSE CAMP 1996

Olympic Chapter along with the Mason County Chapter constructed this camp at Lebar Creek. Browns Creek Camp was abandoned. Lebar was dedicated in 1997.

LEWIS RIVER HORSE CAMP 1993

Dedicated in 1994.

GREEN RIVER HORSE CAMP 1993

Dedicated in 1995.

HALF CAMP 1996

Completed.

While all this was going on externally, internal growth was going on simultaneously. In 1977, BCHW started the Trailhead News, a monthly publication. BCHW joined the Washington State Horse Council in 1987. In 1988 Heidi Hill and Kathi Jaeger developed a BCHW Flag. In 1988,

6000 shirt pocket sized tread lightly handouts were printed and distributed to every BCHW Chapter, and every Forest Service Office in the state! The educational program also changed their name from the Horseman Patrol to the Tread Lightly Crew, promoting the treatment of riding areas with Tender Loving Care. Around 1990 Chapter Officer Training was initiated, and a Chapter Directory started. 1996 saw a separate Education Foundation with 501(c)3 tax status established. In 1997 BCHW joined the Volunteer Trail Work Coalition. That same year saw a new logo for BCHW, along with an e-mail address for the Executive Director. Tread Lightly changed its name to Leave No Trace, and two publicity rides were held, thanks to Kathleen Dawe and Mike McGlenn. 1998 saw officers voted in by mail. 1999 saw 3 new chapters join BCHW and 4 new Master LNT trainers.

In addition to these projects, many others also were spearheaded by BCHW Chapters for the benefit of all recreational horse users. When all chapters work together for the good of horsemen, much is indeed accomplished. BCHW growth is due to the fact that goals remain ones recognized by most horsemen as a benefit for them. Educational and legislative efforts are balanced by the joy and beauty of back country riding.

BCHW is a recognized leader for developing and preserving trail systems and horse camps, and cooperating with other user groups. BCHW continues a united, patient dialogue with various land managers at local and national levels, concerning recreational stock use on public and private lands, ensuring that the history of BCHW continues to be written.

Founder Ken Wilcox recognized a need, and spent the remaining years of his life filling that need. He passed away following heart surgery in 1995. His spirit continues today, to charge us to always ask the question "What will this do to or for the recreational horse user?"

BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF WASHINGTON PRESIDENTS

BOB CALDWELL 1977-1980
FRED RYAN 1981
JOE RUSSELL 1982
FRED RYAN 1983
JIM MURPHY 1984-1988
GERALD WELLINGTON 1989-1990
AL BRENNER 1991-1992
GENE GILBERT 1993
RANDY DARLING 1994-1995
MIKE MCGLENN 1996-1997
MITCH BAIRD 1998-2003
RICK JOHNSON 2004-2005
DAVE JACKSON 2004-

BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF WASHINGTON MEMBERSHIP

1977 222
1978 360
1979 452
1980 525
1981 612
1982 716
1983 806
1984 910
1985 950
1986 1115
1987 1279
1988 1556
1989 1986
1990 1974
1991 2310
1992 2510
1993 2750
1994 2813
1995 2702
1996 2556
1997 2353
1998 2477
1999 2454
2004 3500

**BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF WASHINGTON
CHAPTERS BY INSTATEMENT**

1985
OLYMPIC
SKAGIT
TRAILDUSTERS
1986
TAHOMA
OKANOGAN
METHOW VALLEY
INLAND EMPIRE
PENINSULA
1987
WHATCOM
WENATCHEE VALLEY
1988
RATTLESNAKE RIDGE
THUNDER MOUNTAIN (DISBANDED)
CAPITOL RIDERS,
MASON COUNTY

1989

LEWIS COUNTY
PIERCE COUNTY

1991

NISQUALLY
MT. ST. HELENS

1992

HIGH COUNTRY RIDERS
PURPLE SAGE RIDERS

1993

ALPINE LAKES TRAIL RIDERS
CASCADE HORSE CLUB
ENUMCLAW TRAIL RIDERS
SOUTHWEST REGIONAL APPALOOSA CLUB (DISBANDED)
YAKIMA VALLEY

1994

ISLAND COUNTY
WINE COUNTRY RIDERS

1995

BLUE MOUNTAIN
SCATTER CREEK
MT. ADAMS CHAPTER

1999

WILLIPA HILLS
GRAYS HARBOR
NORTHEAST

2001

BUCKHORN RANGE
OAKLAND BAY

2003

CRAB CREEK RIDERS
WEST SOUND

FERRY COUNTY

2004

TRI RIVERS