



Back Country Horsemen of Middle and South Georgia

www.BCHSG.org



Summer 2006

Issue I Volume I

Organizational Meeting Attended by Interested Trail Riders

On April 8, 2006 an organizational meeting was held at Hard Labor Creek to determine the level of interest in forming the Back Country Horsemen of Middle and South Georgia (BCHSG). With an attendance of 83 and many more who have responded in support, it was decided to move forward with creating the organization. The Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) granted affiliation status unanimously at their April Board meeting.

Organizational officers were appointed and will serve for 1 year at which time an election will be held to fill term positions. Your organizational officers are as follows:

Tina Maddox, President
francis@athens.net
706-319-0239

Laine Dreher, Secretary
lainedreh@aol.com
478-946-6141

Jack White, Vice-President
kwhite@uga.edu
706-769-9892

Adriane Altman, Treasurer
adrianealtman@aol.com
478-986-4097

Mission Statement:

The Back Country Horsemen of Middle and South Georgia is a non-profit organization dedicated to perpetuating the common sense use and enjoyment of horses on Georgia's Public Lands. We work to insure that public lands remain open to equine use and assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of those resources.

Statement of Purpose:

Local men and women dedicated to the preservation of our right to the common sense use of and equine access to Georgia's Public Land.

Everyone who is interested in working on the organizational board is invited to participate. We will need a lot of help in many areas and many hands make light work.

Right to Ride Bill Stalls in Senate

The US Senate version of the Right to Ride Bill, S. 781 is apparently tied up in the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee. You can help by contacting your Senator.

The message should start out with a request, e.g.: "I encourage you to support the Right to Ride Bill S. 781 and request your assistance to move the Right to Ride Bill S. 781 out of the Energy and Natural Resource Committee and onto the Senate floor." You may want to follow up with a personal anecdote, such as an example centering on the fact that there would be no trails in our backcountry without saddle and pack stock. And/or saddle and pack stock are used to pack in tools, and supplies to trail workers. Please ask your horse friends, bicycling friends, OHV friends, hikers and everyone else to help you with this campaign.

Following is contact information for Georgia's Senators; Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson.

Saxby Chambliss
Chambliss.senate.gov
416 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Johnny Isakson
Isakson.senate.gov
120 Russell Senate Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Final Ruling in Favor of Back Country Horsemen of America

As many of you are aware, **Back Country Horsemen of America recently filed a lawsuit challenging the Forest Service's development of a new trail classification system (TCS)** which will be implemented in a way that we believe will reduce our access to trails on the National Forests. BCHA's concern was that the new trail classification system would make it extremely easy for Forest Service personnel in the field to downgrade trails, with no public input much less notice, and thus end up keeping stock off these trails. Despite exhaustive efforts to work with the Forest Service amicably to resolve our issues, the agency simply refused to insert safeguards into the new system and assured us that our predictions of reduced stock use were unjustified. We then reluctantly concluded that our only option to protect our interests was to bring the matter before a judge by filing a lawsuit. Our fundamental argument to the judge was that developing a new trail classification system was something that the public had a right to be involved in, and it should not be left solely to a handful of selected agency personnel who may not have our interests in mind.

In response to our suit, the Forest Service aggressively argued that the TCS was an internal agency matter that did not affect us. The agency misleadingly portrayed the TCS as merely taking "inventory" and that it involved administrative decisions on how best to apply the limited agency budget. In other words, it was none of our business. The problem was that the TCS would

also serve as the active management guide for how trails would be maintained. Moreover, the TCS created a new trail class that was exclusively for hikers, and would allow field personnel to easily slip trails into this class, especially trails in wilderness areas, with no public involvement.

The judge agreed with us that we have a right under federal law to be involved in decisions such as the one at issue which involve the trail system. This holding is a critical development in establishing our rights with respect to our trails. Being informed of and having a right to have input in an agency decision is critical to protecting our rights, and before this holding the Forest Service was able to operate behind a curtain. Given her holding, the judge ordered the Forest Service to comply with the law and involve the public in its decision-making process, *before* it made a decision. The Forest Service has indicated to us that, in response to the judge's order, they intend to issue a notice of their intended action and provide for full public comment on the new trail classification system and its impacts.

The key now is to ensure that our concerns are heard and addressed. We have engaged lawyers to successfully enforce our rights to be involved (which the Forest Service wanted to deny us), and now it is our turn to make the most of our rights. To do this, it is very important that, through our formal comments, and any other communications that we can make,

the Forest Service officials who repeatedly tell us that they support stock use truly understand our concerns. We will use this opportunity to fight for safeguards in the process that protect against secret agency action and unjustified limits being imposed on our use of our trails.

In addition, we as individuals must continually ensure that any re-classification of specific trails is done through a public process. The first step you can take is to find out the classes which are currently assigned to the trails

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Work Day Schedule

July 15th

Oconee National Forest

Join us for our first official work day as Back Country Horsemen in Georgia

Meet at the Wise Creek Hunt Camp at 1098A outside of Monticello and bring gloves, heavy shoes, clippers, nippers, rakes, hoes, hand saws and insect repellent. Horses are welcome but we will be working so plan to ride and tie. Remember to bring water for you and your horse.

**For details please call
Randy Brown at
478-288-6684**

**Come on,
Be a part of the solution!**

Leave No Trace **One of the principles of BCHSG**

The Leave No Trace program teaches and develops practical conservation techniques designed to minimize the "impact" of visitors on the wilderness environment. "Impact" refers to changes visitors create in the backcountry, such as trampling of fragile vegetation or pollution of water sources. The term may also refer to social impacts--behavior that diminishes the wilderness experience of other visitors. Effective minimum-impact practices are incorporated into the national Leave No Trace education program as the following Leave No Trace Principles.

Principles of Leave No Trace

- ? Plan Ahead and Prepare
- ? Concentrate Use in Resistant Areas
- ? Avoid Places Where Impact is Just Beginning
- ? Pack It In, Pack It Out
- ? Properly Dispose of What You Can't Pack Out
- ? Leave What You Find
- ? Use Fire Responsibly

These principles are a guide to minimizing the impact of your backcountry visits to America's arid regions. Before traveling into the backcountry, we recommend that you check with local officials of the Forest Service, Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land

Management or other managing agency for advice and regulations specific to the area you will be traveling in. First and foremost, it is important to carefully review and follow all agency regulations and recommendations; these materials support and complement agency guidelines. Minimizing our impact on the backcountry depends more on attitude and awareness than on rules and regulations.

Leave No Trace camping practices must be flexible and tempered by judgment and experience. Consider all of the variables of each place including the soil, vegetation, wildlife, moisture level, the amount and type of use the area receives, as well as the overall effect of prior use. Use these observations to determine which recommended practices to apply. Minimize your effects on the land and on other visitors, while enjoying your visit as well.

Included in your membership packet is a flyer from **Leave No Trace**. BCHSG encourages everyone to follow these principles to minimize our impact on trails and facilities. For more information on Leave No Trace, visit their website at www.LNT.org or call at

(800) 332-4100

From the President

I want to take a minute to thank everyone who has worked to get this fantastic organization off to a great start! We have years ahead of us to make a difference in Georgia and with this beginning I think we are headed in the right direction. To recap, on April 8, 2006 we held the organizational meeting for the Back Country Horsemen of Middle and South Georgia (BCHSG). With an attendance of 83 and many more who have responded in support, it was decided to move forward with creating the organization. Affiliation status was granted unanimously by the Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) at their April Board meeting. Thanks to everyone who has made this beginning possible!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!

We need more members. Our first year goal is to be an organization with 500 members. You can help by recruiting your friends and neighbors. They don't to be horse riders, they just need to support the "right to ride".

If you have ideas for membership drives, we want to hear them. You can contact any executive member listed on the front page of this newsletter.

ALL IDEAS WELCOME!!!

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in your area and inform your local District Rangers and Recreational Managers that you want to be told of any changes in those classifications. **To ensure that you are kept informed, periodically ask for the current trail classes to that the agency knows you are staying on top of the issue.** In the event a trail in your area is downgraded, you must actively lobby your Forest and local Congressman or Senator and fight that decision.

For further questions, contact Back Country Horsemen of America Chair Merlyn Huso (hlazym@usfamily.net) or Steve Didier, BCHA Legal Committee Chair, (steve.didier@gmail.com).

*The key now is to ensure
that our concerns are heard
and addressed.*

Charter Members

A big **"THANK YOU"** goes out to the following charter members of the BCHSG. Thanks to these folks, we have a strong base upon which to build our organization.

Adriane Altman
Allison Altman
Kathleen Baldwin
Lauren Billings
Margaret Brown
Randy Brown
Bruce & Tammy Coleman
Ron Cook
Gerald Davis
Tom Dixie
Laine, Bubba & Perry Dreher
Jack Garber
Deb Hilty
Joanna Howe
Charles Hyden
James Brantley
Gary & Lori Janes
Jimmy Johnson, Sr.
Randy & Penny Kesler
Jon Lower

Tina Maddox
Elizabeth Malcome
Debbie & Lamar Mullinax
Gene Owen
Don Patton
Blaine Rankin
Sarah Ross
Deirdra Selph
Chrystal & Ron Sherwood
Mary Sikes
Dan & Charlotte Strawn
Joe Thompson
Jim & Laurie Underwood
Maranda & Russell West
Mary West
Susan S White
Jack & Kathy White
Gail Wiley
Donna Yawn

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**Come On, Be a Part of the Solution!
Join BCHSG Today!**

