

The Back Country Horsemen of Idaho's annual convention was hosted in Bonners Ferry by the Selkirk chapter of the organization. The Selkirk chapter is centered in Bonners Ferry. Back Country Horsemen of America is a national organization with state organizations that have chapters located throughout the state. Twelve Idaho chapters joined the Selkirk chapter at the Kootenai River Inn to get together to discuss current business. The organization's mission is to promote the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in the back country. BCHI works with the Forest Service to keep trails open to horseback riders and to maintain and build trails. BCHI also promotes the use of horses on the trails and works to educate horsemen of all ages to participate in sustainable use of forest trails by horseback. All who have interest in riding the back country of Idaho are welcome to join. It is a very close knit group of riders who have the same goal of keeping horseback riding available on the forest trails.

This year's convention opened with the directors meeting on Friday. Chairwoman, Karen Kimball was joined by state treasurer, Kay Ryan and secretary, Raenette Didier. Each chapter has directors who come prepared to discuss business for the year. Whereas each chapter has the same mission as the state body, because of the distances between locations horsemen don't regularly ride together. This makes the yearly state convention an ideal place to meet like minded back country horseback riders to discuss trails and rides. The second day resolutions were presented for the delegates of all chapters present to vote on. Along with the business of voting on these proposals a new chapter was welcomed to join- from Moscow, Chris Reed represented what will be the Palouse chapter. He handed in all necessary paperwork to the BCHI chairwoman, Karen Kimball.

Bonners Ferry Mayor, David Anderson gave a welcome talk that caused all to feel welcome. He stated that Bonners Ferry is one of the most safe places because it is so well policed by, the city police, county sheriff, tribal police, railroad police, forest service police, BLM police, and the Border Patrol. He also confirmed what many have suspected- that the surveyors who surveyed the east border of the panhandle of Idaho mistakenly drew a line on the wrong mountain range. He hinted that inebriation may have been a factor when the survey was done, so that's why Idaho has a narrow panhandle!

Various other folks presented ideas and opportunities that are of interest to the membership in general. BCHI has a website that lists all chapters, gives a mission statement and news about what is going on with back country riders and the trails they ride. There are lots of photos of the work these horsemen do on the trails and the camaraderie is evident. Speaking of photos, riders from many chapters send in photos to Debbie

Samovar from St. Maries who puts together a beautiful BCHI Calendar every year. This calendar has photos from all over the state showing Back Country Horsemen riding and working on trails. The BCHI Calendar is offered to the public, and along with the purchase there is an opportunity to win gift prizes at the end of each year.

After BCHI business was taken care of there were three speakers- George Bain, a Region 1 Forester spoke about relations between the Forest Service and different recreation user groups including BCHI. Next, Chuck Cox from southern Idaho represented Zoetis speaking on the ins and outs of equine vaccinations and de-wormers. He imparted very valuable information all horsemen are interested in concerning the health of their horses. Shane Robinson, a government trapper spoke about livestock depredation by predators. He gave detailed statistics with numbers of deprecations caused by bears, cougars and wolves. Wolves came up as the number one depredation predator which is no surprise to rural residents and livestock owners in Idaho. Shane showed how a trapper investigates a livestock kill to be able to determine what predator caused the damage. He demonstrated how he uses both snares and traps on the predators- mostly wolves and stated that the offending wolves are destroyed rather than relocated.

The convention ended with an evening banquet at the Kootenai River Inn. The gathering was sparked by friendly jawing of horsemen from all over Idaho. The food was excellent! Members of the Selkirk chapter emceed the festivities. There were silent auction items everyone perused and inspected before making a bid. Premier auctioneer, JoJoBaker led a live auction with fast moving bids punctuated with humor. Most horsemen took home a treasure or two. Sunday morning saw some 100 horsemen pack up to drive back home to their local chapter locations and tell the folks what all happened at the convention.

The Selkirk chapter did a mighty fine job hosting the 2014 convention and all BCHI chapters thank them for the fine layout they provided! Bonners Ferry was friendly in their welcome as was the Kootenai River Inn. Both were excellent in their welcome to BCHI! Next year's convention will be held in McCall, hosted by the Heartland chapter.