

**BCH of Virginia State Report for 2024-
Presented at the 2025 BCHA National Board Meeting**



BCHVA CHAPTERS

Chapter Name	Abbreviation	Primary public agency and land
BCH of the Virginia Highlands	BCHVH	George Washington /Jefferson National Forest, Mt Rogers NRA
BCH Eastern Divide	BCCHED	George Washington /Jefferson National Forest- Eastern Divide District, County and State Parks
Golden Horseshoe BCH	GHBCH	George Washington /Jefferson National Forest, St.Parks
Coalfields BCH- New Chapter	CFBCH	George Washington /Jefferson National Forest- Clinch Ranger District, Cumberland Gap Natnl Pk

BCHVA BOD & Officers-

Chairman -Jeff Nelson- Virginia Highlands
1st Vice Chairman- Jane Eckes- Golden Horseshoe
2nd Vice Chairman- Nancy Sluys- Virginia Highlands
Treasurer- Sandi Pennington- Eastern Divide
Secretary- Marge Lewter- Eastern Divide
National Director- Nancy Sluys- Virginia Highlands
National Director-Sally Farrell- Eastern Divide
Alternate National Director- Jeff Nelson- Virginia Highlands
Board Member- Monica Dean- Golden Horseshoe
Past President- Kerry Beard- Eastern Divide



Backcountry Horsemen of Virginia

Volunteer Hours Report

January/1/2024-December/31/2024

	P1 Totals	Rate per hour/mile/day	Total Value	
Total Basic Hours	1059	\$33.49	\$35,465.91	Calculated per hour
Total Skilled Hours	377	\$50.23	\$18,911.60	Calculated per hour
Total Trail Recon Hours	202	\$33.49	\$6,764.98	Calculated per hour
Total LNT - Education	198	\$33.49	\$6,631.02	Calculated per hour
Total Public Meetings	23	\$33.49	\$770.27	Calculated per hour
Total Administrative Service	267	\$33.49	\$8,941.83	Calculated per hour
Total Travel Time	333	\$33.49	\$11,135.43	Calculated per hour
Total Hours	2458			
Wilderness Trail Miles	40			
Other Trail Miles	1403			
Total Trail Miles	1443			
Personal Vehicle	12145	\$0.67	\$8,137.15	Calculated per mile
Stock Hauling	2003	\$1.35	\$2,704.05	Calculated per mile
Total Travel Miles	14148			
Power Equipment	358	\$35.00	\$12,512.50	Calculated per hour
Heavy Equipment	183	\$140.00	\$25,620.00	Calculated per hour
Total Equipment Hours	541			
Total Stock (Pack and Saddle)	62			
Total Stock Days	59	\$125.00	\$7,375.00	Calculated per day
Total Donations	\$0.00		\$0.00	
		Total	\$144,969.73	



BCH of Virginia State News

New and Potential Virginia Chapters- The Coalfield Back Country Horseman chapter is currently forming in Coeburn in far southwest Virginia and will be voted in on April 10, 2025. CFBCH will maintain trails in the Clinch Ranger District of the George Washington /Jefferson National Forest and also the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park.

Another chapter is in the beginning stages of forming in the Fort Valley area of north central Virginia.

Agency and Partner Interaction-

All Virginia chapters are very engaged with their land management offices. Chapters are partnering with other organizations to combine strengths to get bigger things done

The **Eastern Divide** chapter, in the Blacksburg/ Roanoke area, is very active in several city, county and national forest trail systems where they help maintain trails and educate other trail users. Members continue to work with the Craig Botetourt Scenic Trail Committee in planning the rail trail and acquiring equestrian parking.. They have also been partnering with the town of Blacksburg, the US Forest Service and other user groups on the new McDonald Hollow Multi Use Trail System and also with the US Forest Service on the new Grace Furnace area. EDBCH also maintains the Flat Top trail system adjacent to the White Cedars Horse Camp in the George Washington / Jefferson National Forest, Eastern Divide District. This area sustained significant damage from Hurricane Helene and BCED is spearheading the clean up efforts.

The **Golden Horseshoe** chapter, near Lexington, VA, interacts with the Glenwood Peddler district of the George Washington / Jefferson National Forest to maintain the Glenwood Horse Trail (65+ miles). BCHGH have modified their volunteer agreement with the Forest Service to include using mechanized equipment in the maintenance of trails so they can take over some of the backlog. Coordinating with the Forest Service to repaint all the blazes on the Glenwood Horse Trail.

The **Virginia Highlands** chapter, in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, interacts frequently with the Forest Service and have formed a team approach to addressing problems in the forest. There has been positive turnover in the Forest Service with a new Rec Manager, Area Ranger and several new trail techs coming aboard. They have been eager to work with BCHVH and have been very receptive to our ideas.

BCHVH has partnered with the Forest Service on several significant grant opportunities along with other partner organizations such as the Appalachian Conservation Corps (ACC) and Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS).

The **Coalfield** chapter near Coeburn has just gotten started and are reaching out to their land managers to get their volunteer agreements in order. Members of the group are also connected with the Tri-State Trail Coalition and the Cumberland Gap Trail Alliance.

BCHVA Chapter Reports

Eastern Divide-

Members continue to work with the Craig Botetourt Scenic Trail Committee in planning the rail trail and acquiring equestrian parking.

Members continue to work with the town of Blacksburg on the Brush Mountain Trail system which is a popular multi-use trail system catering to the bike community.

Work has begun to repair White Cedar Horse Camp and trails from the Hurricane Helene damage, including requesting grant recovery funds for heavy equipment and sawyer help. Many trails are completely blocked by fallen trees.

BCHED is developing a relationship with the Virginia Horse Council in connecting with youth and Virginia legislators.

The chapter provides education to local Mountain Bike teams on Sharing the Trails with Horses. BCHED works to reach out to neighboring BCH chapters and other riding clubs. They hope to develop a professional video on trail riding for marketing to riders. (This is a new idea from Marge but a new member has volunteered to help with this :PinecreekVidz)

BCHED Sponsored a clinic on packing and wilderness ethics for a group of 4-H kids. The kids and some parents really enjoyed the mules and the packing instruction.

Members joined up to volunteer for NATRC and AERC rides in our area and helped other chapters on their work projects.

Members of Eastern Divide also helped organize loads of supplies, hay and feed that were sent to Hurricane Helene flood victims in east Tennessee.



Virginia Highlands-

In the Spring of 2024 BCHVH, in partnership with the Appalachian Conservation Corps (ACC), AK Trails LLC and the Forest Service, completed the 2 year Virginia Highlands Horse Trail- Jones Creek Project that was funded by a \$75,000.00 Legacy Trails Grant administered by American Trails. BCHVH also fundraised over \$25,000.00 to complete the project which improved the sustainability approximately 17 miles of multi-use trail. BCHVH was proud to win the BCHA Double Diamond for the Hale Hole, a 300' turnpike structure constructed in partnership with the ACC as part of the Legacy Trails Grant Project.

In August the BCHVH hosted the Arabian Horse Association Distance Nationals, an AERC sanctioned endurance ride in Cripple Creek, VA which included 25,50 and 100 mile distances. The event served as a fundraiser for the BCHVH Trail Fund. Members of all the Virginia chapters turned out to volunteer to make the ride a huge success.

At the end of September the Mount Rogers NRA was hit especially hard by the flooding and winds from Hurricane Helene, especially in the western half of the park known as the High Country. The iconic Virginia Creeper Trail (rail trail) lost 17 trestles and much of the trail tread on a 14 mile section of the trail, which is the life blood of the town of Damascus. The Virginia Highlands Horse Trail (87 mi) also sustained major damage, especially the sections that pass through 3 wilderness areas. BCHVH will be partnering with the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), lending pack support to help clear the wilderness trails. BCHVH will also repair several washed out areas of the trail outside of the wilderness areas. BCHVH has contributed over 1000 hours so far clearing trails from the unprecedented damage caused by the hurricane. Thousands of trees blocked about 90% of the 500+ miles of trails and roads in the park. Massive flooding washed out sections of trail, including 1/2 of a 300ft turnpike structure recently constructed during the Legacy Trails Grant Project. Many groups, plus the Forest Service, came together to repair the trails, the work is still ongoing and may take several years to complete. A major reroute project, initiated by BCHVH, that was scheduled for the first week in October, had to be put on hold until 2025 due to the focus on storm damage repair.

Thanks to BCHVH, and several other local groups, the majority of trails in the eastern half of Mt Rogers NRA have been cleared.

Several members took advantage of some educational opportunities, attending a Horse and Mule Packing Class held at the Wilderness Skills Institute in North Carolina and 7 members became chainsaw certified or re-certified .

BCHVH also worked with the FS during several ongoing timber projects to ensure maximum access for trail users and to help communicate to the public.



Golden Horseshoe -

Blazed 40 plus miles of Glenwood Horse from Hellgate Trail to Jennings Creek Trailhead. This included adding about 30% more blazes, removing 100's of orange plastic diamonds, brushing back where marks could be visible, removing blazes on the wrong side of the trail and adding post with blazes in some areas. Also maintained 4 main trail heads, which included keeping the trash cleaned up, Limbing, weed eating and mowing grass etc.

Had 13 scheduled work days on the calendar and was able to work 10 or 11 of those.

Probably that many more spontaneous emails for smaller projects on the trail.

3 schedule meetings in person with good attendance.

3 recerts for chainsaw and one new certification.

First aid class with 10 people attending.

Hosted an informational booth at the Great American Trail Horse Sale in Lexington, VA

Many postings of things on our GHBCHA website.

Thanks to Leah and others.

Multiple meetings, phone calls and emails with our Forest Service district.

We love our trail specialist, Megan Martin and our volunteer coordinator Plinio Beres.

They are the two best we've had in this district in a long, long time.

Cultivated a better relationship with our head ranger Lauren Stull



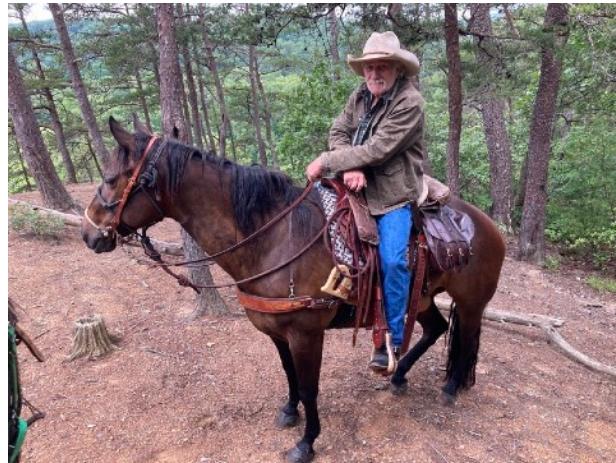
Coalfield-

The Back Country Horsemen of Virginia would like to welcome the Coalfield Chapter to the BCHA Family!

The Coalfield chapter is located in far southwest Virginia, in the Coeburn area. They will be maintaining trails in the Clinch Ranger District of the George Washington / Jefferson National Forest and the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park. Coalfield had a great turnout at their first meeting. We look forward to interacting with this vibrant new chapter!



Back Country Horsemen of Virginia Chapters Gettin' things done!!!





Happy Trails!!!