



Arkansas State Board 2025

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National Delegate: Jacque Alexander

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Arkansas Back Country Horsemen 2025

We Keep Your Trails Open

ARKANSAS BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF AMERICA 2025 Annual State Report

In 2025, Arkansas Back Country Horsemen (ABCH) celebrated 31 years as part of Back Country Horsemen of America, continuing our shared mission of keeping public trails open and protecting our heritage of safe and responsible equine use on public lands. Currently, we proudly support four chapters: **Buffalo River Chapter Back Country Horsemen, Lower Buffalo River Back Country Horsemen, Sylamore Back Country Horsemen, and Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Arkansas**. Each chapter has its own area of focus, but they share the common goal of keeping our equestrian trails open. In fact, many of our members are active in more than one chapter, and it's not unusual to find two or more chapters coming together on work days and special projects. Our numbers (Single-66; Family-67) tell only part of our story. Our ranks are strengthened by the camaraderie we've built working side by side and by the deep, lasting friendships we've made riding and camping together. This bond was most visible recently when two of our own lost their home in a devastating fire. Within hours, and continuing since, our members showed up. First, they came with food and shoulders to lean on; later with familiar tools of our trade – chainsaws, electric clippers, shovels, tractors, and trailers – everything you might need to remove mangled debris and to dig for lost treasures. So, amid the ashes and loss, progress, laughter, and hope moved in to claim their rightful places. Commitment and dedication to our mission and to each other allow us to accomplish more than our numbers might imply.

After more than 30 years, Arkansas Back Country Horsemen is still growing and learning as an organization, but we know that our hard work and strong bonds sustain us and will help us stay viable in 2026 and beyond.

Good News to report for 2026: Our four chapters will soon be joined by a fifth. Our national delegate and state vice-president, Jacque Alexander, has been working with a group of individuals interested in starting a chapter in the Big Piney District of the Ozark National Forest. This section includes the East Fork Wilderness where the only USFS designated horse trail in Arkansas is located. That trail has received no maintenance in many years and is in danger



of being decommissioned, so the news of a new chapter dedicated to this area is most welcome. For those who have ridden in Arkansas, you may be familiar with several of the commercial equestrian camps located in the Big Piney District, including Boston Mountain Horse Camp, Cowboy Up Trails, and the recently closed Falling Water Horse Camp. Our state board has been presented with the proposed chapter's bylaws and a list of founding members and will vote soon to approve it as our newest chapter.

Volunteer Hours 2025:

Accurate volunteer hours reporting is still a work in progress here in Arkansas (maybe some of you can relate). Despite under reporting, our members contributed **6272** volunteer hours for 2025, valued at **\$392,937.06**.



Backcountry Horsemen of America Volunteer Hours Report - Arkansas BCH

January 1 - December 31, 2025

	P1 Totals	Rate per hour/mile/day	Total Value	
Total Basic Hours	3653	\$34.79	\$127,087.87	Calculated per hour
Total Skilled Hours	376	\$52.19	\$19,623.44	Calculated per hour
Total Trail Recon Hours	197	\$34.79	\$6,853.63	Calculated per hour
Total LNT - Education	463	\$34.79	\$16,107.77	Calculated per hour
Total Public Meetings	189	\$34.79	\$6,575.31	Calculated per hour
Total Administrative Service	188	\$34.79	\$6,540.52	Calculated per hour
Total Travel Time	1206	\$34.79	\$41,956.74	Calculated per hour
Total Hours	6272			
Wilderness Trail Miles	1263			
National Scenic Trail Miles	140			
Other Trail Miles	526			
Total Trail Miles	1929			
Personal Vehicle	18434	\$0.67	\$12,350.78	Calculated per mile
Stock Hauling	40760	\$1.35	\$55,026.00	Calculated per mile
Total Travel Miles	59194			
Power Equipment	180	\$35.00	\$6,300.00	Calculated per hour
Heavy Equipment	26	\$140.00	\$3,640.00	Calculated per hour
Total Equipment Hours	206			
Total Stock (Pack and Saddle)	570			
Total Stock Days	724	\$125.00	\$90,500.00	Calculated per day
Total Donations	\$375.00		\$375.00	
		Total	\$392,937.06	

Highlights and Accomplishments 2025:

Natural State Day

In **February**, the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation hosted the first Natural State Day at the Capitol during the legislative session. ABCH was one of forty exhibitors (the only equine organization) chosen to join in the celebration of the state's thriving outdoor industry. Through a vivid photo display, informational handouts (including statistics on the economic impact of the horse industry), compelling videos, and one-on-one storytelling we were able to show just how we put our mission into action keeping public trails open for everyone to enjoy. We ended the day feeling that we had represented the equine community well, hoping that in the future we will have a seat at the table when issues affecting our interests are being decided.



Sawyer Training

In March, our fledgling **Sawyer Training Program** took another step forward when instructors Jim Center and Henry Crouch provided chainsaw certification training for seven of our members. They were joined by five members of Ozark Off Road Cyclists (an IMBA chapter), which dovetailed well with our goals of improving relationships with other trail users and increasing awareness of our efforts in trail advocacy and maintenance. Sadly, Henry Crouch retired after this class, but we are grateful for all he did to get our program off to a good start. The future of our in-house saw training was secured in November, thanks to the efforts of Mark Himmel and Sherry Copeland who coordinated an instructor training class in Missouri. Two of our members, Mitch Barnett and Mike McGee, took advantage of this opportunity to earn their C levels, and our state chainsaw coordinator, Larkin Floyd, also benefited from additional training.



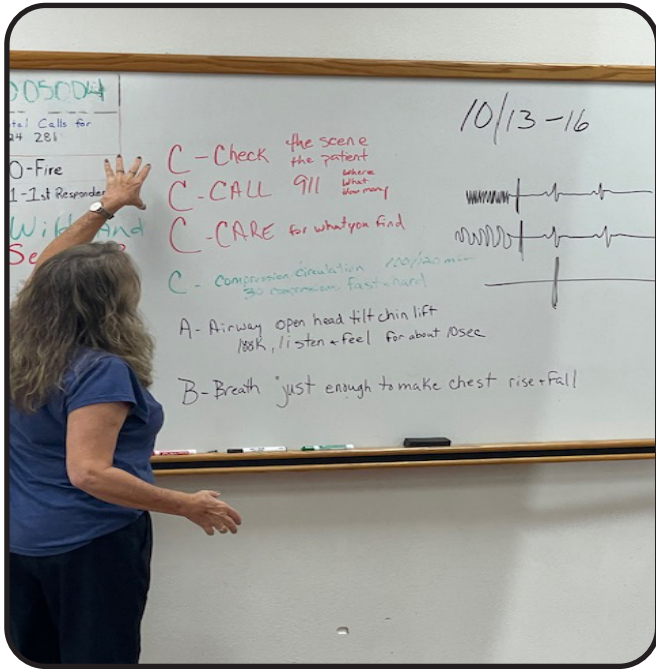
Annual State Meeting and Rendezvous

Our **Annual Membership Meeting and Rendezvous** was held May 8-11 at Cowboy Trails in Witt Springs. Members from all four chapters gathered for several days to ride, camp, and catch up in the welcoming environment of one of our favorite commercial horse camps. The official meeting and potluck on Saturday gave chapters the opportunity to showcase their annual activities. Our national delegates, Jacque Alexander and Larkin Floyd, reported highlights from the recent National Board Meeting, and Jacque introduced the Light on the Land campaign. The guest speaker was Andrew Eddy, the Recreation Management Specialist and Trails Manager for the Ozark-St Francis National Forest. Eddy expressed interest in building a good working relationship with our organization, noting the recent staffing cuts that will make trail maintenance challenging without our volunteers. The 2026 meeting will be hosted by Back Country Horsemen NWA at Devil's Den State Park.



CPR/First Aid Classes

Both **Back County Horsemen NWA** and **Buffalo River** chapters provided **CPR and First Aid** classes for our members in 2025. Inspired by one of these classes, an anonymous participant donated a life-saving AED to the Buffalo River chapter. This AED is now available on work days and camp outs.



Ribbon Cutting for Devil's Den Horse Camp

On June 4, 2025, Arkansas Back Country Horsemen was invited by Arkansas State Parks and Devil's Den State Park officials to participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly renovated Devil's Den State Park Horse Campground. This was a celebration of a several years long, multi-million-dollar project to reclaim a fraying, but beloved, camp in northwest Arkansas. As Jacque Alexander noted in her address to the assembled crowd, this renovation represents a recognition of and a strong commitment to the equine community in our state, for which we are most grateful. This occasion was truly a moment to shine for Back Country Horsemen NWA as Devil's Den is part of its service area, and it was evident how vital the chapter's work is to the park and how appreciated its members are. For the last two years BCHNWA has held regular work days at Devil's Den, working to reclaim trails that had been devastated in a tornado. After the dedication ceremony, their president Jim Center led us on several rides, showcasing not only the beauty of the area, but also the practical impact of his chapter's work. Call it irony, but a day later while several BCH members were still in camp, another tornado struck, inflicting minor damage on the horse camp but once again leaving a significant impact on the trails. Undaunted, Jim and his team members were quickly back in business, assessing the damage and beginning the boots-on-the-ground efforts that would once again ensure our public trails remain open.



River Ride Five

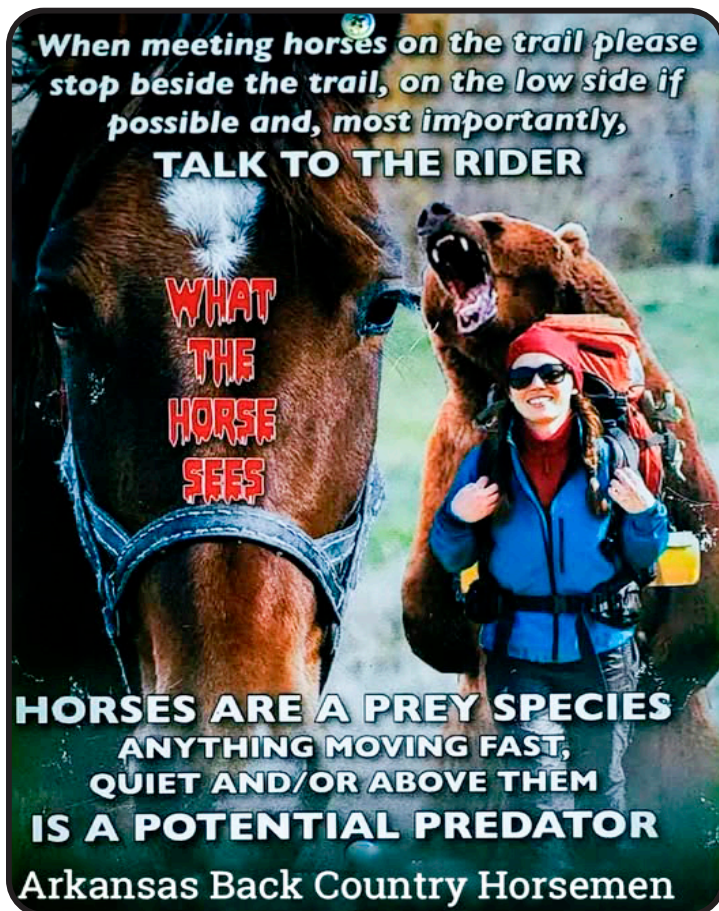
Trail maintenance is always at the heart of our mission and that work took on special significance in 2025 when members of **Buffalo River Chapter** decided to try another end-to-end progressive ride of the Buffalo National River – the fifth such endeavor over the last 15 years. Joined by our fellow BCH members of the **Lower Buffalo River**, our work began in earnest in the spring as we set out to reclaim many of our trails and river crossings that had been severely damaged in two record-breaking floods. Organizing River Ride Five also required hours of meetings with the NPS to write and rewrite a Special Use Permit. This permit was needed because there is no continuous trail spanning the length of the river. This meant that lots of scouting hours were required so that we could piece together a route that satisfied both our members and NPS officials. An intense work schedule meant that every trail and old road trace along that route received some much-needed TLC, and most were in the best shape they had ever been.

After months of clearing trails and planning and preparation, riders were all set to depart in early October when suddenly all park officials were furloughed - on the very day we were due to sign the required permit. Undaunted, we assumed implied consent and the ride commenced on time with nearly a year's worth of work behind us and ten glorious days ahead. The weather was fine, the horses and mules were eager and strong, and the days in the saddle and the nights around the campfire are now bound in our memories forever. Ask any participant and they will declare that River Ride Five was indeed the highlight of 2025.



Communication, Social Media, and Information Sharing

Each of our chapters works diligently to keep its members informed about meetings, work days, and local and national issues that affect trail access. Our primary communication tools are Facebook and email, but one chapter deserves special recognition in getting our message out to the wider community. As Rhonda Kelly-Duncan, information officer for **BCHNWA**, says, “the more people we reach, the more trails we protect.” She and the other tech savvy members of her team effectively tackle all aspects of media presence, including continued growth across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Expanded on-site presence at parades, arena events, and rodeos that include well-staffed information tables have reached a large segment of the equine community, as has their “Make Rides Matter” campaign which supports membership growth through public-facing educational content. One YouTube post about BCHNWA’s ongoing work at Pea Ridge National Military Park even reached an international audience. And, thanks to Rhonda, as well as Rebecca Thompson, Caitlin Kingery, and Cecilia Wiser, the Arkansas Trails Safety and Education Campaign is in full swing with posters and social media posts featuring share the trail etiquette and safety tips. Our trail work and trail advocacy stand on their own, but the continued growth and vitality of our state’s chapter depend on the public knowing who we are and what we do. **Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Arkansas** is leading the way in showing us how to ensure our future.





BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Arkansas

2025 VOLUNTEER IMPACT REPORT

Because Rides Matter.

2025 BCHNWA VOLUNTEER BY THE NUMBERS

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Total Volunteer Hours: 2,010 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan–July: 842 hours • Aug–Dec: 1,168 hours </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Total Trail Miles Logged: 958 miles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan–July: 443 miles • Aug–Dec: 515 miles </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Total Travel Miles Logged: 14,595 miles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan–July: 8,637 miles • Aug–Dec: 5,958 miles </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Total Travel Miles Logged: 14,595 miles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan–July: 8,637 miles • Aug–Dec: 5,958 miles </div> </div>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Estimated Volunteer Value: \$112,462.88</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan–July: \$50,123.46 • Aug–Dec: \$62,339.42 </div> </div>	<p>JOIN OR LEARN MORE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Chapter – BCHNWA www.bchnwa.net State – Back Country Horsemen of Arkansas www.bcha.org National – Back Country Horsemen of America www.bcha.org

#BackCountryHorsemen #BCHNWA
#MakeRidesMatter #EquestrianAccess

Public lands don't maintain themselves. Our trails stay open because volunteers step up. Join BCHNWA and be part of the solution.

ARKANSAS BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN 2025





Rhonda Kelly
PHOTOGRAPHY



Back Country Horsemen of America

MISSION STATEMENT

- ★ To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness areas.
- ★ To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
- ★ To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
- ★ To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise use of the back country resources by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
- ★ To foster and encourage individuals to join and participate in their local, state and national BCHA organizations.





For More Information About Arkansas Back Country Horsemen:

arkansasbch@gmail.com

(513) 400-3959

arkansasbch.org

