

Burnt Cabin project

Backcountry Horsemen of Missoula completed a work project at Burnt Cabin on July 14th-17th 2023. Burnt cabin is located about 8.5 miles up Monture trail #27 from the Monture trailhead which is close to the town of Ovando Montana. Burnt Cabin sits at the trail junction that takes you either over Limestone pass (trail # 402) or you can continue over Hahn pass into the heart of the Bob Marshall wilderness. There is a beautiful Creek that flows right next to the cabin called Burnt Cabin Creek that provides water to travelers and the stock tank in the two corrals. The cabin, hay shelter and corrals are used by Forest Service trail workers, wilderness rangers, and forest service volunteers like us.

This year's project consisted of repairing the hay shelter that was originally built and erected by 14 members of Backcountry Horsemen of Missoula in 2009. The last few years, rodents, (probably pack rats and maybe even porcupines) have done damage to the lower one foot of the hay shelter. So on July 15th, members of Missoula Backcountry Horsemen, packed into Burnt Cabin to complete repairs on the hay shelter. All the horses and mules did an amazing job on the trip in and the trip out, and seemed to enjoy the trip as much as the volunteers did. The metal that was used to repair the hay shelter was packed in by the Forest Service's famous Ninemile pack string the week before with a load of hay. The plan was to stay at Monture Guard station the night before the trip, and to travel during the cool of the morning to the cabin because daytime temperatures were reaching over 100 degrees. The following morning after our trip into the cabin the work began early when the weather was cool. Metal called "coil stock" was put on the lower two feet of the cabin all the way around the perimeter. The metal and metal screws matched the color of the cabin perfectly. By the time the work was completed the day was getting hot and we were ready to put the tools away. The rest of the day was spent in the shade swapping stories and looking at a map of the Bob Marshall wilderness. We had amazing meals thanks to the combined efforts and cooking skills of the team. With the project completed and the forecast for the following day being close to 100°, we decided to leave as early as possible the next morning for the return trip. So the following morning with a light breakfast and some great coffee we packed up our gear, tacked up the horses and mules, mounted up and rode back out to the Monture guard station. We were already talking about next year's project and what we could accomplish at Burnt Cabin. The ride back was enjoyable with a beautiful cool morning.

Backcountry Horsemen of Missoula has had a decade and a half of work projects at Burnt Cabin. Members have remodeled the interior, taking out the hay storage room and moving the stove, another summer we reroofed the cabin, another year we built a front porch, construction of the watering system to the corral just to name a few of the many projects. A lot of these projects were done while other BCH members were clearing trails to Limestone and Hahn passes. This is not a complete list of the legacy but more of sample of the history that BCH of Missoula has accomplished with its partnership with Seeley Lake Ranger District of Lolo National Forest Service volunteers.

A special thanks goes out to Seeley Lake ranger district's trail crew and for all their help getting this project organized and to the crew that work so hard to keep our trails open.

Mark Wright