

Backcountry Horsemen of California



STARTING A NEW BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN UNIT

Concerned men and women dedicated to
Gentle Use of California trails and
backcountry.

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WHAT? INTRODUCTION

The name “Backcountry Horsemen” identifies an organization that promotes safe and responsible use of the backcountry throughout the United States. Members of Backcountry Horsemen of California are expected to practice “Gentle Use” of public lands and to be knowledgeable of the regulations and policies that apply to such activities.

The use of the name Backcountry Horsemen carries with it an obligation to adhere to the objectives of the BCHC and to practice the “Gentle Use” ethics advocated by the organization. The name or its logos must never be used for purposes other than to promote the goals of the organization in a responsible manner in conformance with the policies established by the State Board. Any questions of propriety should be addressed to the Executive Committee and/or State Board prior to any use of the name or logos on private articles or on letterhead used in communicating personal opinions to agencies or other organizations.

Individual members are encouraged to be active and express their own opinions concerning issues of importance to backcountry users. However it is also important that any view of an individual expressed as a representative of the organization be in accord with the mission and purpose of the organization - especially if there is any doubt about whether the statement conforms to the policies of BCHC.



THE BENEFITS OF FORMING A NEW BCHC UNIT

- Companionship of people with like interests
- Organized volunteer service projects, rides and social events
- Opportunities to learn new skills such as packing, Dutch oven cooking
- Leadership and personal growth opportunities
- Partnering with other units in the State BCHC organization to share information, methods and ideas
- Joining with other units in the State BCHC to increase our voice from one to many and lobby to support or oppose legislation

WHY?



HOW?

10 STEPS TO STARTING A NEW BCHC UNIT

1

RECOGNIZE THE NEED in your area for horsemen and women to have a voice in public lands use and backcountry activities. **TALK IT OVER** with 2-3 others and make a commitment to form an organization.

2

HOLD AN INFORMAL MEETING at your home or in a coffee shop. Each of you should invite at least 2 others with similar interests. Create a welcoming atmosphere by serving simple refreshments. Discuss the concept of starting a BCHC unit. Have BCHC membership applications available, try to get a commitment from those attending to enroll as BCHC members. Select an interim President and begin to plan for a formal organization meeting to be held as soon as possible.

3

PLAN A WELL-PUBLICISED, INTERESTING ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING. The success or failure of this meeting will depend upon your advance preparation and organization. **PLAN** how you are going to publicize the meeting (flyers/posters, notice in newspaper, radio PSAs, phone campaign, etc.) **MAKE PERSONAL CONTACT** with friends, members of other horse organizations and other interested people. Arrange for a guest speaker from a nearby BCHC unit or the State Executive Committee to explain the history, goals and objectives of BCHC.

10 STEPS TO STARTING A NEW BCHC UNIT, continued

4

HOLD YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING.

- Choose a meeting place that is centrally located, comfortable and large enough for your group. Free rooms may be available from schools, libraries, churches, businesses, or public buildings.
- Keep this a family activity and expect some parents to bring their children.
- Be prepared to make a presentation to 25-40 people.
- Serve simple refreshments.
- Wear name tags and introduce everyone.
- Have handout materials available such as BCHA brochures, BCHA and BCHC newsletters, Gentle Use publications.
- Ask someone to record minutes of the meeting.
- Outline the purpose of the meeting.
- Present and discuss the objectives and purposes of BCHC; review the organizational requirements, Bylaws, dues structure and rebate procedures and, as a group, decide to form an organization.
- Elect interim officers and appoint a Bylaws Committee. Interim officers should serve for a time-limited period (for example, 3 months).
- Begin the process of selecting a unit name that is descriptive and includes "BCHC".
- Schedule the first General (all membership) Meeting, establishing the date, time and place.
- Take membership applications from those wishing to join and collect applicable dues. Send applications and money to the BCHC Membership Coordinator.

10 STEPS TO STARTING A NEW BCHC UNIT, continued

5

ALWAYS MAINTAIN ACCURATE FINANCIAL RECORDS to help ensure that the new unit will remain solvent and instill in the membership (and others) confidence that the unit's finances are being properly managed.

6

APPOINT A SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP A UNIT BUDGET. A budget is a plan for receiving and spending money, usually made up a year at a time, normally covering the calendar. In developing the budget, expenses for the year must be estimated and a plan devised for raising funds to meet those expenses.

7

OPEN A BANK ACCOUNT AS SOON AS YOUR CASH ON HAND EXCEEDS ABOUT \$50. Usually 3-4 members should be authorized to sign and 2 signatures should be required on any transaction. **APPLY FOR AN EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER** from the IRS (Form SS4). You need this number to open a unit bank account. Upon receipt open a unit bank account in a local bank. Try to select a bank with free or low cost checking and other services.

10 STEPS TO STARTING A NEW BCHC UNIT, continued

8

RENT A POST OFFICE BOX for receiving mail.

9

HOLD THE FIRST GENERAL MEETING.

Read the minutes of the organizational meeting. Propose, discuss and adopt Unit Bylaws, elect permanent officers, establish committees and a tentative activity calendar.

10

APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP ON THE BCHC STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Write a letter to the BCHC President, including your Employee Identification Number and unit address. Attach copies of your Unit Bylaws and a list of your officers and committee chairpersons, their addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

CONGRATULATIONS

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE OF THE BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN OF CALIFORNIA

Backcountry Horsemen of California (BCHC) is incorporated in the state of California and is made up of individuals from throughout the state who have formed an association dedicated to preserve the use of pack and saddle stock on trails and forage areas on public lands. Membership in the BCHC is open to any individual over 18 years of age or family with concerns and goals compatible with the organization's. Members affiliate with a local unit. Members in a region not represented by a local unit are encouraged to form a new local unit. Local units conduct events and activities as they choose but must operate under broad guidelines established by the BCHC State Board.

The BCHC is governed by a Board of Directors. The number of Directors representing a unit is determined by the number of members in that unit at midnight on December 31. Every unit, regardless of size, has one Director. For each additional 150 members, another Director is added. At the beginning of each year a membership demographics report is prepared and a copy sent to each unit informing of the number of members and the number of Directors allocated.

The State Board elects a President, 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Treasurer, Secretary, Vice President of Public Lands and Vice President of Education. In addition, it appoints two Delegates to the National Board of the Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA). These persons along with the Past President make up the Executive Committee. The 1st Vice President serves as Insurance Coordinator and the 2nd Vice President as Volunteer Service Coordinator. The State Board establishes policies that must be adhered to by the local units. The Board oversees activities of the local units, conducts an annual state convention (Rendezvous), and secures limited liability insurance and a degree of protection under the corporate umbrella. The Board meets at least two times a year. Meetings are always open to the general membership.

UNIT POLICIES

The individual units of the BCHC operate under the guidance of the State Executive Committee and the State Board of Directors. Each unit must recognize and abide by the BCHC Bylaws and policies adopted by the State Board. Individual units are required to adopt Bylaws that are consistent with the Bylaws of BCHC and all its revisions, past, present and future. Any amendment to individual Unit Bylaws must be submitted to and approved by the BCHC Board before formal adoption by the unit.

Units are expected to send at least one delegate to each meeting of the BCHC State Board. The BCHC Bylaws provide for the suspension, by vote of the State Board, of any Unit that fails to be represented at two consecutive State Board meetings. The Board may also take action to suspend any unit that becomes ineffective, or does not abide by its own or the BCHC Bylaws. A unit may be considered ineffective by any or all of the following: (1) Failure to have regular meetings. (2) Total membership less than ten members. (3) Failure to elect officers on an annual basis. (4) Failure to comply with BCHC accounting and reporting procedures or meet established deadlines.

A Unit that is suspended or dissolved, either by its choice or action of the BCHC State Board must, without delay, surrender all assets of the Unit to the control of the BCHC Treasurer. Those assets will be held in trust for one year. If the Unit becomes active and is reinstated within one year, those assets will be returned to the care of the elected Unit Treasurer. If the Unit remains inactive, all such assets become the property of the BCHC State Board.



Membership Management Policy

1. All membership applications and dues must be sent directly to the BCHC Membership Coordinator for processing. Applications collected by an individual unit should immediately be forwarded to the Membership Coordinator with the dues check. Avoid sending cash. When cash is collected the unit should retain the cash and issue a check in the correct amount to include when submitting the membership application.
2. The unit's portion of dues will be rebated around the first of each month. One-half of the Individual and Family membership dues is returned to the unit. Associate Memberships dues will be distributed 1/3 to BCHC, Inc. and 2/3 to the local Unit. Dues or fees collected from Patron, Benefactor and Mt. Whitney Memberships will be treated as Family Memberships in calculation of rebate due the Unit and the BCHC, Inc. treasury will retain the balance.
3. The Membership Coordinator will provide each unit with a monthly activity report that shows changes of address, amount of dues paid, dates posted, and other information necessary to keep the unit's roster in agreement with the State membership list.
4. The Membership Coordinator will send a reminder notice to every member. Memberships are deemed delinquent if not paid by the end of the month following their expiration.
5. The Membership Coordinator will provide any unit with an updated printout of that unit's membership roster upon request.
6. The Membership Coordinator will supply mailing labels to any unit requesting such service at reasonable cost.
7. The BCHC mailing list is protected and may not be used for other than BCHC business without permission from the State Board of Directors.

Monetary Policies

The BCHC Unit's Board of Directors shall designate the financial institution to be used as a depository for unit funds and shall specify the officers by whose signatures the funds may be drawn from such depositories, one of whom shall be the Treasurer.

Each local Unit shall by February 15 of each year prepare and render an annual report, including a financial statement for the past year, for BCHC, Inc. and forward to the Secretary of the BCHC, Inc. The forms for the annual report shall be provided to the Units in a timely manner by the State.



Discipline Policies

Unit Bylaws must adhere to BCHC Bylaws and should include a section describing how to discipline members for failure to comply with the organization's objectives and philosophies or members whose conduct is considered endangering to the character, interest or welfare of the organization. The section should also include a provision for advance notification of the member against whom action is being taken and a definition of the quorum required for a valid decision-making vote. The noncompliant member shall have at least ten (10) days to submit a written response to the allegations and shall be advised of the time and place where his/her reply may be submitted to the State Board.

UNIT OPERATION IS A GROUP EFFORT

The Executive Committee

Formation of a Unit Executive Committee is optional. Some units have such a committee made up of all officers, assigned duties by the Unit Board of Directors. Other units do not have an Executive Committee but rather make decisions and establish policies through the participation of all Unit Board members.

The Public Lands Committee

The Unit's Public Lands Committee (PLC) is its political voice. On the Unit level you may have an individual or a committee in charge of Public Lands activities. This individual or committee is responsible for maintaining communication with public agencies and must monitor the formulation of management plans and alert membership of any action or proposed action that could have an adverse effect on our ability to utilize backcountry trails and forage areas with pack and saddle stock. The PLC should strive to place members on local "planning teams" or advisory panels whenever possible as it represents all horsemen that use the trails and backcountry resources. It is important that our reaction to any action be consistent throughout the state. It is essential that each unit's PLC operate under the guidelines set by the State Board. If there is any doubt about appropriate action, contact the BCHC Vice President of Public Lands prior to taking an action that might not be consistent with state or national (BCHA) policy.

One representative of each Unit sits on the BCHC Public Lands Committee.

The Volunteer Service Committee

As the Unit's Public Lands Committee is the political voice of the organization, its Volunteer Service Committee is the strong arms conducting volunteer projects. The importance of lending a hand in the maintenance and improvement of the recreation resource of the forests and parks cannot be overstated. Such projects not only serve to preserve and protect trails, pastures, fences, campsites and wildlife, but are a source of great personal satisfaction for all who take part. When you work shoulder to shoulder with another member for a day or two, you will have made a friend or enhanced a friendship. Every unit should have organized volunteer service projects ("work parties") that welcome any member. The unit can also encourage members to work independently. Contact your public agency personnel (US Forest Service, National and State Parks) for their suggestions for projects. Be sure to report the annual results of your efforts (the hours and dollar values) to the BCHC 2nd Vice President on the required Volunteer Service Hours Report form.

The Education Committee

The future use of public lands depends on how users conduct themselves. With the increasing demand on resources it is imperative that users conduct themselves in a "Gentle" way, leaving as little trace of their passing as is possible. The Education Committee of a unit is charged with teaching the techniques and ethics involved in responsible use of stock, the trails, and the lands we travel through. The BCHC Vice President of Education is responsible for developing and administering a curriculum of wilderness education that will teach the skills and techniques necessary. Each new unit should immediately select an Education Chairperson. In addition to working with the State Education Committee in presentation of a curriculum, that person is charged to arrange for clinics, seminars and demonstrations that improve the skills and the image of unit members. One representative of each Unit sits on the BCHC Education Committee.

COMMUNICATION IS VITALLY IMPORTANT

Unit Meetings

Unit meetings should be held regularly, once a month, if possible. Notification of meetings should be included in the unit calendar that is published in the unit newsletter and web page. It is recommended that a carefully prepared standard meeting agenda be followed:

- Welcome and Call to Order—President
- Introduction of New Members and Guests
- Minutes of the Previous Meeting—Secretary
- Correspondence—Secretary
- Treasurer's Report—Treasurer
- Standing Committee Reports
- Special Committee Reports
- Unfinished/Old Business
- New Business
- Announcements
- Adjournment

Start and finish the meeting on time. To maintain organization and order, meetings should be run by the rules of Parliamentary Procedure understood and accepted by all members.

The unit Secretary should record minutes of each meeting and maintain the minutes as an official record of unit business. Minutes are usually written in third person and should include:

- Organization name; date, place and time of meeting
- Names of Board members present and absent
- A record of main motions with names of maker and outcome
- Summaries of committee reports and other discussions
- Record of all appointments, elections

Unit Newsletter

A unit newsletter is the most important means of communicating with members. Most BCHC units publish a unit newsletter which serves to keep members aware of what is going on in their unit as well as articles of local interest. Frequency of newsletter publication varies from unit to unit.

The unit newsletter should be neat, easy to read and as professional as possible in appearance. For the highest quality newsletter, try to include the following elements:

- A masthead or banner with unit and publication names, date, issue number and name of newsletter editor
- Unit Officers', Directors' and Committee Chairpersons' names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses
- Unit calendar of events with dates and contact people
- A message from the Unit President
- Descriptions of Unit activities and events (with photos to generate interest, when available and space allows)
- Concise articles from members and other information sources
- The BCHC membership application form
- A statement of the Objectives and Purpose of BCHC

Unit Web Page

Another means of communicating with members and potential members is to develop a unit web page and post it on the Internet with a link to and from the BCHC web page. Purely voluntary, this high tech resource may generate worldwide interest in your activities and projects.

BCHC has established guidelines for Internet sites. The State Board is responsible for overseeing and directing unit webmasters. Any request from the State Board to modify, add or delete web page content shall be addressed in a timely manner. Unit web pages are similar to unit newsletters in that they should contain information about meetings, events and issues of specific interest to the local unit.

The BCHC Webmaster is available to provide technical assistance and advice upon request.

Sample Unit Bylaws

_____ Unit of Backcountry Horsemen of California, Inc.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this unit of the Backcountry Horsemen of California shall be:

ARTICLE II

Objectives and Purpose

- Section 1: To promote care and conservation of backcountry trails, campsites, streams and meadows.
- Section 2: To foster the use of backcountry trails by horsemen and women in the National Parks and Forests, State Parks, BLM Lands and other public entities.
- Section 3: To keep the unit’s membership informed of regulations that effect stock use on public lands, and to inform the membership of any pending regulations that might effect that use.
- Section 4: To promote public awareness of the historical aspects of stock use in the backcountry.
- Section 5: To keep the public administrators aware of the works and interests of the unit.

ARTICLE III

Board of Directors

- Section 1: The management of the affairs, property, business and control of policy is vested in the Board of Directors.
- Section 2: The Board of Directors shall be composed of ____ members. The Board of Directors shall be elected from the general membership at its first general membership meeting and at the annual membership meeting thereafter.
- Section 3: The Board of Directors shall meet as determined by the Board at its annual meeting.
- Section 4: The Directors in attendance shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting unit business.

CONTINUED..

ARTICLE IV
Officers

- Section 1: The unit shall have a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, the annually prorated number of State Board Directors, and any other officers deemed necessary by the unit's Board of Directors.
- Section 2: Each officer shall perform all usual and customary duties for that office, or as designated by the Board of Directors.
- Section 3: Vacancies shall be filled by the Board of Directors at its next meeting.
- Section 4: The term of service for each office shall be determined by the Board of Directors.
- Section 5: Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be determined by the Board.

ARTICLE V
Membership

- Section 1: Individual or Family Membership in the Backcountry Horsemen of California is open to any person/family over 18 interested in the goals and purposes of the organization. Each Individual Member in good standing shall have one vote in affairs submitted to the general membership. Each Family Membership shall have two votes.
- Section 2: Dues: The amount of annual dues is determined by the BCHC State Board of Directors. One-half of dues collected by the State Board is returned to the unit to which the member belongs. Additional dues may be assessed by the _____ Unit of the BCHC.
- Section 3: Meetings: There shall be at least two annual general membership meetings and any other meetings deemed necessary by the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VI
Committees

- Section 1: The Chairman of each committee shall be selected by the President. Each Chairman shall select individual members to serve on their committee from the general membership.
- Section 2: Standing Committees shall be: Membership, Public Liaison, Education and Service Projects. The Board of Directors or the President may form additional committees as needed.

ARTICLE VII
Amendments

- Section 1: These Bylaws may be amended at any meeting of the Board of Directors by a two-thirds vote of members present.



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