

BCHVH REGULAR MEETING
October 12, 2019

ATTENDEES: Susan & Charlie Smith, Ron & Teresa Anderson, Diane Cherry & Ron McArthur, Nancy & Bill Sluys, Renee & Curtis Stillwell, Anne Lemere & Byron Wallace, Holly Schenk, Ron Smith, Cheryl Melton, Dawn & Shelton Bass, Martha Teitelbaum, Marge Lewter, Laurel Pollock, Susan Tomaselli, Deidre Perot, Daryl & Jackie Peterson, Erica Jones, Sandi Pennington, Betty Washburn, Stephen Drysdale, Tanya Hahn, Elin Call, Patricia Lacy, Cindy Nester, and a few more people whose names we missed, sorry.

Nancy called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

- Previous meeting minutes – Secretary asked for and received approval of the July 6th meeting minutes as amended.
- Treasurer's report – Administrative Account: \$3868.17 -
Trail Fund Account: \$7687.60
- Volunteer Hours- BCHVH reported 550 trail hours to the Forest Service in 2019! Please log your hours using the handy form on the web site. The link is <http://www.bchvh.org/volunteer-hours/>
- Southern States account total –\$23.00 (92 POPs).
They will now only accept POP from Legends and Southern States horse feeds.

The Fall Trail Ride and Campout weekend was a success and we welcomed visitors from BCH Eastern Divide, BCH Golden Horseshoe and BCH North Carolina. The weather was nice and the pot luck dinner was outstanding! Several new members joined the group and we look forward to getting to know them in the future!

New business: Our special guest, Barry Garten (Area Ranger for Mt Rogers NRA) and his wife, Barbara, addressed the crowd. Barry introduced himself and explained his role and experience. He came to Mt Rogers from the Clinch District near Wise, Va. and previously worked in several western states, he has been in the Forest Service for over 30years. He is a horseman, having previously owned horses in his younger years and enjoyed trail riding. He understands issues from an equestrian point of view and is willing to work through issues as best as he can with people. Barry commended on our commitment to helping the trail system with special praise given to the Raccoon Branch Packing Project, which was a partnership project with the FS, BCHVH, BCHNC, BCHET, SAWS (Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards) and Navel Midshipmen. The project received recognition all the way up to the national level of the US Forest Service! Thank you everyone who was a part of this project!

There was a question and answer session that is summarized below.

- Nancy Sluys asked where we were in the scoping process for the Ewing Mountain Project, which is a series of vegetation management projects throughout the east end. Barry replied that they are in the environmental assessment part of the process which will determine the nature of each project site and that the public will have further input in the future as the plan is fleshed out. He will keep us informed as the process moves forward.

- Stephen Drysdale and Martha Teitlebaum both asked about problems and safety issues with how the Valley Divide Trail ends at hwy 16 with nowhere for horses to legally make a loop. The concerns were heard and several ideas were discussed for making a loop and will be further looked into. Barry will meet with Stephen Drysdale at the trailhead at hwy 16 to look into making a safer crossing for horse traffic including possibly of installing culverts to eliminate the ditch that causes horses to pause or balk when crossing the road as well as signage on the road alerting cars and trucks that there is a crossing, there was also mention of lowering the speed limit in that area as well as the crossing at Raccoon Branch.

- It was mentioned that our trail fund is growing into a significant amount and we would like to use it on a trail project in the near future. A meeting will be scheduled to discuss the possibilities.

- Someone asked about Chain Saw Certification Course. Barry replied that there will be one in the spring and we will be able to send a few of our members to that. Please consider becoming certified to help our work crews!

- The conversation went on for a long time and we did not have a chance to cover everything. The BCHVH Public Lands Committee will be having a meeting in a few weeks with Barry as well as the new Recreation Manager (who is replacing Sara Abbott). Subjects we did not have time to discuss at this meeting will be brought up such as the parking lot at the Bourne's Branch Trailhead (Kiosk) and the status of Straight Mountain where the FS recently purchased a tract of land.

- Overall, members found Barry to be friendly and receptive to our needs and issues. He values partnerships and tries to listen to people's concerns. We look forward to working with him and others in the Forest Service to reach our goals of maintaining and improving the trail system in the Mount Rogers NRA!

The next meeting of the BCHVH will be December 7th at the home of Curtis & Renee Stillwell in the Collins Cove Community and will be our annual Christmas Party complete with Dirty Santa Gift Exchange. Stay tuned for more information on that and please plan on attending!!

Meeting adjourned sometime after 9:00 pm.
Diane Cherry, Secretary & Nancy Sluys- President