



BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN OF CALIFORNIA

13061 Rosedale Hwy Suite G
Bakersfield, CA 93314

February 10, 2020

From: Chip Herzig

To: BCHC Unit and State Leaders,

This document is the final version of our strategic plan. It was developed over 8 months by a planning committee. We met multiple times by video conference to follow a planning process and this document is the result.

As you will see in this plan, the success of our association lies in the success of our 22 local units. Those of us who have accepted state leadership responsibilities do so in support of the units and their good work. And there's a lot of work to do. But we're a committed bunch and these action plans are good guidelines for growing our membership and for transitioning to the next generation of leaders.

If there are additional comments about this plan, please forward them to the planning committee, via your unit leader. We'll add additional revisions as implementation begins.

A HUGE thank you to my fellow following strategic planning committee members, for your insight, for sharing your experience and for riding through the many altitude adjustments we went through together:

Lloyd Erlandson, Lynn Joiner, Pete Kriger, Mike King, Karen Lopes, Bob Magee, Jacque Murphy, Susie Patton and Lynn Bodtker.

Each unit will be negotiating their plan implementation selections and responsibilities after the plan has been formally adopted by Board vote.

Sincerely,

Chip Herzig
Strategic Planning Committee Chair

Backcountry Horsemen of California

Strategic Plan

As of February 10, 2019



BCHC Objectives and Purpose

- To improve and promote the use, care and development of California backcountry trails, campsites, streams and meadows; to advocate good trail manners.
- To promote the conservation and utilization of our backcountry resources in concert with livestock transportation.
- To keep the backcountry trails and forage areas open to horsemen on public lands.
- To keep current information before the membership and its local Units regarding legislation or management plans related to government backcountry regulation.
- To support or oppose new proposals, plans and restrictions related to the interest of horsemen and those interested in recreational stock use or enjoying the backcountry.
- To promote the interest of people who, due to health or physical factors, need transportation other than by foot on backcountry trails.
- To promote public awareness and interest in the historical aspect of horsemen and stock in the backcountry and to help educate backcountry users on ways to use the trail and forage in a manner that conserves the backcountry resources.
- To assist in keeping the public informed of the vital need for a clean backcountry.
- To promote a working relationship with and keep the work and interests of the Corporation before our local, state and federal officials.
- To assist in the formation and continuation of local Units to carry out these purposes.

Introduction

Backcountry Horsemen's good work for access to public lands and horse camps in California is carried out primarily by volunteers in unit-sponsored programs, and by Committees that operate with volunteers who belong to local BCH units.

Our overall planning strategy is to make it easier for those in statewide and unit leadership positions to carry out their volunteer work by providing outlines and checklists of proven best practices from units with good experience hosting a particular event. This subtle but important leadership transition makes it feasible for less-experienced and younger members to take on responsibilities which have been traditionally handled by older members.

Outreach to potential new members, on the other hand, is the responsibility of all members. Personal invitations to join, to volunteer and to lead are essential for keeping our association viable. Members enjoy camaraderie, learning and practicing packing and trail maintenance skills, and experiencing California's amazing wilderness areas with a community of like-minded folks.

Many of our hiking and equestrian trails literally could not exist without our members' important volunteer work.

Strategic Planning Terminology



Priority Objectives - Statement of expected outcomes.



Success Measures - Display progress on journey towards achieving the priority objectives.



Strategies - How the priority objectives will be achieved. Where we will invest and concentrate human, technology and financial resources to develop BCHC's capabilities.



Action Plans - steps towards achieving the priority objectives broken into smaller programs, projects and tasks that focus implementation into the right program sequence. Get started for success.



Summary of Priority Objectives

Seven objectives form the core of BCHC's strategic plan. Each of these is addressed with a description of the desired outcomes and an outline of the actions which *units* can take to implement these objectives.

1. Enabling trail maintenance and trail support projects
2. Program best practices available to local units
3. Rendezvous
4. Youth program development
5. New member recruitment and retention
6. Website and social media transition
7. BCHC Services available to local units. Implementing this last objective is the responsibility of *statewide* officers and board members.



1. Priority Objective: Enable more trail maintenance and trail support projects



Success Measures:

Every unit hosting or participating in a trail project annually.



Strategy:

Document in outline and checklist format the best practices, resources needed and operational considerations to make it easier for units to **support trail maintenance crews working in their local public lands**. Continue to expand BCHC's Forest Service cooperation and support with trained sawyers, and to further develop our relationships with State and Federal public land management agencies.

Enabling trail maintenance is a core activity of BCHC units.



Unit Action Plans:

- Sawyer certification program and first aid training offered to members
- Standardize two-way communication methodology to contact backcountry volunteers (satellite phone, Garmin In-reach, etc.)
- Units inviting other units to their large trail projects - advertise via PCTA
- Member attendance at PCTA trail skills college
- Unit relationships with local land management agencies





2. Priority Objective: Make program of best practices available to local units



Success Measures:

- Complete outline checklists for the most common BCHC best practices and events (an initial list is below).



Strategy:

Ask each of our 22 California units to volunteer and select one type of event or program to document in outline and checklist format. These will be shared on our website so that all units can access these best practices. This will make it easier for ***newer members to accept responsibility for leading*** one of their unit's events or programs for members. Each unit can select an event they are proud of, and Incorporate the Mid-Valley checklists.



Action Plan:

Unit Best Practices Checklist

- Trail clearing projects, trailhead camping, pack-ins (example below)
- Horse camp-outs
- Pack trips
- Parades and special rides
- Special events such as youth events, pack clinic, play day
- Fundraising event
- Dutch oven gatherings
- Monthly meetings
- General membership meetings
- New member recruitment
- Holding unit elections
- Public land manager relationships
- Unit volunteer appreciation BBQ each fall

Send above checklists or others to BCHC Membership Chair include your name, unit and contact information. A Planning Template EXAMPLE is included on the next page.

Planning Template Example (Trail Clearing Pack-In Project)

Timeline	Task	Person Responsible	People Involved	Notes...
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 months prior to event	Work with & communicate with appropriate Agency contacts regarding trail clearing project to set dates. (Make Reservations if applicable)	Volunteer Service Coordinator	+Forest Service Trails Manager/ Wilderness Mgr & Trail Clearing Project Leader	Date is tentative & depends on trail & weather conditions.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 months prior	Advertise dates & project description to members in newsletter, FB, and email for volunteers.	Trail Clearing Project Leader	Same	Remind volunteers that appropriate certifications are necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 month prior	Assign cook, trail tools leader, communications leader, first aid leader, etc...	TCPL	Leader & Crew (Determine # of stock needed for trip.)	Send volunteer assignments/responsibilities as one email to all stakeholders; cc agency contact.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 weeks prior	Email reminder to crew: stock in shape, good shoes, PPE required, Medical Info Form completed, etc.	TCPL	Leader & Crew	Attach 7 LNT principles to email:- Discuss/address any medical alerts.
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 week prior	Check & maintain all tools that will be utilized on trip. Pack First Aid Kit.	Tool Leader	Tool Leader	Sharpen blades /replace chains, oil, fuel, inventory all equipment.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 days prior	Shopping for food/meal prep.	Cook	Cook	Repackage, reduce waste, check with volunteers for food allergies/restrictions.
<input type="checkbox"/> Day of Departure	Secure Wilderness Permit.	TCPL		Carry at all times.
<input type="checkbox"/> Trailhead	BCHC Safety Protocol -see website for details	TCPL	All Volunteers	Emphasize SAFETY!
<input type="checkbox"/> Post Trip	Debrief	TCPL	All Volunteers	What went right? What went wrong? What changes, if any, need to be made for the next project?



3. Priority Objective: Rebuild Rendezvous Attendance



Success Measures:

Rebuild attendance and member participation in Rendezvous, including the use of this event as a great trail experience for bringing potential new members.



Strategy:

As our primary statewide event, Rendezvous is the best experience that we have to offer current, new and prospective members. ***It's cowboy networking at its best.*** We'll update the format, frequency, locations, programs, pricing, sponsorships, marketing, partnerships with local government and local organizations to make it a don't-miss event.



After surveying members as to what they liked and did not like about Rendezvous we realized that as our premier event we needed to offer a wider variety of classes and vendors. We want to have something for everyone, including but not limited to:

- Competitions - including some for youth, families and individuals - Trail trials for experienced riders/packers
- Education Classes -Cover all levels from novice all the way to the very experienced member: veterinary information, first aid for humans and animals, feeding and care of livestock, horseshoeing techniques, how to evacuate large animals, GPS training, laws on hauling livestock, Leave No Trace principals, Sawyer training
- Vendors that cater to the western way of life and sell equipment needed by members
- Youth Fun area
- Packing and Dutch oven cooking demonstrations
- Professional Trainers doing demonstrations that appeal to all levels of livestock owners
- Good food, fun and entertainment

The next Rendezvous will be held March 27 - 29, 2020 at the Tehama Fairgrounds in Red Bluff, CA.

Support to the Rendezvous Committee from a group of experienced State Officers is critical to helping Rendezvous be successful. All committees will be furnished with a Rendezvous Notebook with timelines, suggestions and advice. The State Officers will serve as advisors to the committees.

Moving the Rendezvous up and down the State from South, to Central to North, is important to our members. This gives them an opportunity to attend without the long drives every couple of years. It also opens us to a new group of potential new members. This system gives different groups of Units the opportunity to show off their area and the resources around that area.





4. Priority Objective: Youth program development



Success Measures:

Build a continuous flow of new members from the next generation(s) who appreciate and care for wilderness hiking and equestrian trails.



Strategies:

Develop local and statewide relationships with youth organizations which ***will introduce youth to our units' work in the outdoors, to the essential skills needed, and to the use and care of horses and pack stock.*** Comply with California law regarding background checks and fingerprinting for adults who lead youth activities.

Policies

Youth policies have been developed and distributed to all units.



Unit Action Plans:

- Membership categories have been developed for youth 12-17 and 18-24. Youth activities will follow the approved policies.
- Background checks and fingerprinting for youth leaders. Finalize policies and forms rolled out to all units.
- Include 4H and FFA in Rendezvous (Planning Committee)
- Unit relationships with 4H and FFA local chapters are important
- Units outreach to local youth organizations (Scouts?) to jointly sponsor events



5. Priority Objective: New member development and retention



Success Measures:

Every unit has a net membership growth.



Strategies:

Test and refine different approaches to generate awareness of our work among equestrians in each unit's local area. Include proven programs for recruiting, mentoring and integrating new members into the unit's programs and local activities, especially *programs which address trail access for the general public.*



Action Plans for Awareness of a BCHC Unit:

- Develop a membership committee in each unit
- Put up posters, banners and sponsorships at local feed stores and trail camps.
- Social media - Facebook and Instagram postings by units



Action Plans for Trial:

- Hand deliver a new member packet to each new member. Discuss their interests and expectations. A sample packet is available.
- Offer potential new members a group ride as their first event. If camaraderie is good, we can follow up with training for camping with your horse, with other stock present, and then a trail project.
- Institute a mentor program to “ride shotgun” for new members, developing familiarity with horse camp, trail projects and other essential skills. This personal approach has been proven to get new members active and committed to BCHC.
- Personally contact trail groups to consider joint events
- Rendezvous as a new member attraction to discuss their wilderness experiences



Action Plans for Repeat/Loyalty/Long-term members:

- Rendezvous participation is important for developing both skills and relationships.
- Unit publishes a calendar of events with periodic updates. Personal contact to less-active members. Newsletter published showing involvement opportunities.
- Consider an electronic community forum for all members with different chat groups to address different interests.



6. Priority Objective: Website and social media transition



Success Measures:

Frequency of checklist downloads by units (other measures may include downloads, traffic statistics, time on each site, engagement, shares, etc.)



State and Unit Website strategy:

State and unit websites are used primarily for:

- ***Distribution of information resources***, including checklists and outlines of best practices, resources from national BCHA and information being developed from these Priority Objectives. Event information is also available.
- To direct potential new members to the membership chairperson in each unit



State Facebook page:

Primarily to build community for current members: distribute news, events, share experiences, a community-building forum (add specific groups within?), two-way communication with our members, and as an outreach platform to other like-minded organizations. Members rely on it for event details.



Unit Facebook and Instagram pages (optional)

Use social media platforms for local units to attract new members from within current members' social networks. Instagram reaches millennials, Facebook reaches parents and grandparents but overall with more wide demographics than other platforms.

Snapchat reaches tweeners (<https://www.flint-group.com/blog/social-media-demographics/>) Think about the right platform for the target audience we are speaking to, for creating community within the units (local experiences) and for reaching out to new members.



7. BCHC Services available to local units



Success Measures:

Usefulness and actual use of resources and materials (website data), attendance at classes, participation at events, etc.



Strategies:

BCHC's **22 local units depend on important services** offered by the State organization. Find ways to make these services highly visible, relevant to unit needs, and easy for unit leaders to access.



2020 Major Programs

- We will have representation from every unit at one of our North/Central Valley/South **Unit Officer Trainings**, to teach, to inspire and to share.
- Supporting units in their local fundraising efforts, to finance these services with Rendezvous and other funding sources.

BCHC State services to all units:

- Leave-No-Trace Master Trainers
- Insurance
- Website management
- Grant and sponsorship training for unit funding
- Sawyer Certification and safety programs
- Educational fund grants
- Membership rosters
- Dues reimbursement
- Officer training handbook
- Top hand awards

The current plan is to use the state website for distributing checklists and for access to most of these services.