

Gila Chapter

Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 2/11/2015 6:00 PM | Meeting location GRMC Conference Room

Meeting called by Doug Dexter

Type of meeting Monthly business meeting

Note taker Cindi deCapiteau

Attendees

Joan Bacon, Sharon A. Brown, Tyler Brown (SW Horsemen's Assn.), Victoria Chick, Tom Conway, Cindi deCapiteau, Dixie Dexter, Doug Dexter, Mike Dowd, Gerry Engel, Jean Hill, Maureen McLeod, Fran Rawllins, Stan Rawllins, Cheryl Roth, Randy Roth, Laurie Wlosinski

Agenda topic Recognize guests and new members | Presenter Doug Dexter

Doug extended a hearty Gila welcome to the evening's guest speaker, Tyler Brown (of the Southwest Horsemen's Association) and to first-time visitors, Tom Conway and Maureen McLeod, New Jerseyites who are checking out the sophistication and pleasures of Silver City. Doug also acknowledged the second visit of new Member Joan Bacon. Howdy, Joan!

Agenda topic Approval of minutes, Additions or changes to agenda | Presenter Doug Dexter

The group adopted without any changes last month's terminally entertaining minutes (you'll die laughing when you read them). Doug mentioned that he wants to tack onto tonight's agenda a discussion about an event, Trail Fest (Trailfest? TrailFest?), coming up at the end of April.

Agenda topic Education Segment, S W Horsemen's Park | Presenter Tyler Brown

Our sunny education coordinator, Cheryl Roth, introduced the evening's guest speaker, Tyler Brown, who is the Vice President and Rodeo Chairman of Silver City's Southwest Horsemen's Association (SWHA).

(If you have driven into Silver City by way of US 180 from the east (who hasn't?) you'll likely have seen the highway sign that says "rodeo grounds" or something like that. The sign refers to a facility tucked away on the left—an arena and other infrastructure that's used once a year for a professional rodeo and at other times by members of the SWHA for whatever equine-related foolishness and serious endeavors they have in mind.)

Cheryl commented that Tyler would talk about the SWHA's history, its function in the community, and how we can take advantage of the SWHA's services and facilities.

With an affable grin, Tyler explained that he was born and raised in Grant County. In the 1940s, Tyler's great grandfather, Conn Brown (who worked for the New Mexico land office), along with other interested parties, acquired land for an arena. The original location was on Swann Street and consisted of half an arena, for which the open other half was assembled by a line of parked cars.

After a while, Conn Brown acquired land from New Mexico to build a complete arena up by Wal-Mart. The arena was built for the Grant County Sheriff's Posse, who used the facility through the mid-1980s, when Wal-Mart tore down the arena to build its first store on the site that now houses the Grant County Convention Center.

The SWHA then bought the land where the famed rodeo arena now lies and which hosted its first professional rodeo in 1990 and annually ever since.

The SWHA is a private club and charges modest membership dues (\$15 a year). An existing member must sponsor new members, but Tyler explained that obtaining sponsorship is not a difficult matter.

Once you're accepted as a member, you can vote, attend SWHA meetings, and get roped into helping out at SWHA events. As if those membership duties aren't tasty enough, as a member you are allowed to use the facilities as you want and at any time, a privilege that (for insurance purposes) is restricted to members in good standing. However, if such a member is present, you can be there, even if you're not a member.

Although the annual rodeo is the organization's biggest to-do, SWHA also hosts other events, such as circuses, big truck rallies, and high school 4H rodeos. The association boasts various committees that organize other events, for example, a gymkhana committee and a barrel racing committee.

Tyler extended an invitation to GBCH members to come out and get involved down at the rodeo grounds. The SWHA doesn't go up into the mountains like we do; rather, their mission is to preserve western heritage in other ways—by focusing on equine events. SWHA is a family organization and (like every volunteer group) needs members who can volunteer as their abilities and time permit.

The SWHA currently has between 40 and 50 members. Stan Rawllins asked if SWHA advertises for members, to which Tyler explained that it hasn't done so lately.

Cheryl Roth took up Victoria Chick's perennial search for a location suitable to the needs of competitive trail riding events and asked how using the SWHA facility would work for an organization like the American Competitive Trail Horse Association. Tyler replied that the facilities are rented to such outside groups. He said the cost is about \$250 a day, but the rate depends on the number of participants. If you are a member and you want to organize a group event, you can use the arena at no charge. Cheryl sought clarification: Since she is a member, could she bring in five people for a practice session, invite families and friends to attend? Tyler affirmed the concept.

Fran Rawllins asked about the possibility—as a SWHA member—of holding a meeting at the facility. Tyler responded that there's no suitable building on the premises now. The association has installed a concrete slab with the intention of putting up a building, but that's a longer-term goal. However, water and portable toilets are on site at all times.

Cheryl asked if the association will prepare the arena surface, given advance notice that a member wants to hold an event. Tyler commented that the SWHA has a person who lives on the site; his job is to keep the arena in good shape.

Doug asked if SWHA needs volunteers. Tyler replied yes, especially during rodeo week. The group needs admission ticket takers, liquor ticket takers, and equipment operators for the arena tractor and water truck. "Show up," he said. "If you're interested, there's something we have for you to do."

Doug also inquired about using the SWHA facilities as temporary housing for equines evacuated during an emergency. Tyler responded "absolutely." In addition, he said, the facility has a few sites with RV plug-ins and stall locations, so if any of us have visitors who are bringing horses, consider using the SWHA property. It's not the fanciest of abodes, Tyler mused, but it's certainly functional. The organization would like people to be able to come out to Silver City and camp out at the park.

Tyler noted that rodeo week is June 3-6, 2015. SWHA meetings are usually held on a Tuesday during the first couple of weeks of a given month, but meetings are not regularly scheduled. A meeting is scheduled, however, for Tuesday, March 3, 2015, 6:00 p.m. at Aunt Judy's Attic. (Aunt Judy's Attic is a metal building at 1950 Hwy 180 East. It's on the south side of the highway, past the First National Bank of New Mexico but before Memory Lane.)

In parting, Tyler left us with his phone number—538-1778—and invited us to call him with questions. He promised to make SWHA application forms available to Cheryl, who will make them available to the GBCH members.

For Tyler's benefit, Gerry Engel provided a brief overview of the Back Country Horsemen, stating that our purpose is to perpetuate the use of equines on public lands. Gerry also mentioned that we are a service organization that conducts volunteer work to keep trails open on public lands. Cheryl offered to send links to the local, state, and national BCH websites.

Agenda topic Financial and membership report | Presenter Jean Hill

Jean Hill reported that the chapter's bank balance as of the date of this meeting was \$2,869.50. The balance includes transactions from the 2014 Christmas party and three new memberships. Somebody asked about profits or loss from the Christmas party, to which Jean responded that the chapter incurred a loss of \$21.

Jean noted that payment of state membership dues hasn't occurred yet; apparently they're still tussling over the cost of insurance up there. The state's general liability insurance is a work in progress, so Jean didn't see any point in discussing it tonight.

Jean has bank statements available if anybody wants to see them. See February financial report, attached.

Jean also reported that the Gila chapter now has 39 members. This compares with 2014 membership of 52 and 2013 membership of 53. Have bank statements.

Agenda topic Public Service/Communications | Presenter Gerry Engel

Sometimes our public service swami, Gerry Engel, gets busy with things that don't involve horses, the GBCH, or the US Forest Service (USFS). He admitted that such a project (remodeling his and Jean's living room) has interfered with his working out the chapter's 2015 trail maintenance schedule with the USFS. The living room has also interfered with Gerry's development of a new volunteer agreement. Gerry hopes to do this soon so the chapter's bold horsemen-sawyers-trailhackers can begin working in March.

Gerry reminded the group that there's no grant money available from the increasingly threadbare government sources, so when we hit the trails, we do so on our own loot. He also noted that the financial situation could change and that if we can get reimbursement in the future, we'll be able to account for what we've done.

Doug Dexter added that Gerry has applied for grant money from both the Forest Service and Grant County and if the funds come through, we'll be able to reimburse participating trail toilers for food, mileage, tools, etc., but that we're on our own until further notice.

Joan Bacon noted that she has found lots of trees down between Miller Creek and Little Creek (so Gerry could include that area in his planning).

Laurie Wlosinski, who maintains a radar screen for money from non-government sources, reported that our beloved Freeport-MacMoRan has begun its new fiscal year. The application deadline was in November, so there's no money from that particular deep pocket for 2015. She went on to say that Freeport-MacMoRan funds are money intended to give back to the community—through contributions to search and rescue, the arts, and the SW Horsemen's Association.

To receive these funds, we need to submit an application in November, after which Freeport-MacMoRan will prioritize and divvy up the money for distribution in 2016.

Agenda topic *Equine Evac Mapping Status* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

Doug reported that he now has physical addresses from everybody except Louise Cash. The addresses will be used to develop a map that shows where our animals are housed, as well as adjacent locations to which animals can be taken in the event of an evacuation emergency.

Doug also noted that one of his neighbors (Sanctuary Road area), Dean Wilson, has lost his horse and is left with three beautiful pastures, which he is willing to share with evacuated equines.

Agenda topic *GCSAR – mounted training update* | **Presenter** *Laurie Wlosinski*

Laurie reported on recent activities of the mounted division of Grant County Search and Rescue (GCSAR). GCSAR, an organization affiliated with the New Mexico State Police and led by the lionhearted Marc Levesque (brother-in-law to Ted and Mara Miles), conducts operations to aid or rescue missing persons from the backcountry and mountains of New Mexico. The outfit, founded in 1978, has a "ground team" of sturdy individuals who hike all over our rugged terrain, usually starting at night. GCSAR has had mounted teams in the past and is currently working to get one going again.

Doug Dexter, Laurie said, is a hero; he found a lost subject at a recent joint ground-and-mounted team drill over on Ft. Bayard. Six mounted rescuers participated, along with three ground trackers and several others who staffed the incident command post. The teams headed out and communicated by radio about the signs they saw or didn't see. The mounted people were following the tracks as identified, but couldn't find the victim. The exercise accurately mimicked real life rescue missions—nothing went right, communications were garbled, and erroneous information floated around like feathers from a pillow fight. Information from the GPS didn't match information on the paper maps. Paper maps didn't match each other. Trail signs were confusing. Nevertheless (also just like in real life) the participants found the "victim" anyway.

Folks who find themselves overdue for a return from the wilds often report their itineraries before they set out, but then don't go where they said they would, so right off the bat searchers might start looking for them in the wrong place. Things deteriorate from there, as they did in the drill. The ground team was tracking a certain boot print. The horse team was shown the tracks and was able to identify them on the trail, but (because the local hiker outfitter stores all sell the same boot) the print everybody was tracking was for the wrong person. Ted Miles found what looked to be the correct tracks and reported them to incident command, but incident command said they weren't the right tracks (they were in the wrong place apparently). Meanwhile, Gerry Engle was following the right boot print, but for the wrong person. Then it turned out the tracks Ted found actually were the right tracks. When Doug approached the gate at the elk preserve (up Twin Sisters Creek a ways—if you don't know where that is, you need to get on your horse and find it—it's a wonderful ride), the victim jumped out of the woods (and in so doing apparently didn't give Doug or his horse a heart attack).



A report about the exercise appeared in the newspaper and Laurie speculated that the reporter (who is under 30 years of age—HOT DOG!) might sign up as a SAR volunteer. The horses did a great job and Marc was thrilled at how well they performed.

By the way, GCSAR has an informative and easy-to-navigate website. Check it out at <http://www.gcsar-nm.org/index.htm>

Agenda topic *Update: Tucson Rodeo Parade* | **Presenters** *Cheryl Roth, Cindi deCapiteau*

Cindi deCapiteau and Cheryl Roth have signed up for the Tucson Rodeo Parade (the largest all-and-only equine parade in the entire Yewnited States), which will occur on February 26. The two women modeled the vests they'll be wearing and displayed the flags they're training their horses to not freak



out over when the flags are carried in the saddle. One of the flags (discussed last month) bears the BCHA logo and the name and location of the Gila Chapter (see attachment). The other flag is New Mexico's *bandera del sol* (flag of the sun). Both flags are 3x5'. The BCHA flag can be used as a table banner at public events where the chapter has a presence and some of us expect to ride with the flags in the upcoming Silver City 4th of July parade (hint, hint).

Doug Dexter reported that we were advised of the Tucson parade last fall and learned that the Silver City Arts and Cultural District has grant money to pay for an entry. Unfortunately, the council's expectations for parade participation were greater than the level provided by our two mounted flag bearers. Doug's council contact advised that if we could get the people, the council would pay for a wagon, a driver, and a team to haul them around the parade route. Doug began recruitment for wagon decorators and riders, but discovered that the application deadline had passed by the time we got it together. Oh well. Plan to participate next year, okay?

Agenda topic *January State Meeting report* | Presenter *Fran Rawllins, Stan Rawllins*

Fran and Stan Rawllins are the Gila BCH chapter's representatives to the state BCH chapter. They attend meetings (in Bernardo, NM) three times a year. This evening they reported on the state's most recent doings.

Fran commented that one of the benefits of BCH membership is a newsletter produced by the nation BCH office. In the most recent edition, the front page bore a full-color photograph of the president of the New Mexico chapter. (An article by Gerry Engel was published in the newsletter a while back.)

The state rendezvous occurred last summer up at Valles Caldera (west of Los Alamos). Nobody from the Gila chapter attended, mostly because the venue is so far away, but in 2015, the event will be based in the Lincoln National Forest (near Ruidoso). The state organization is recruiting people from the seven local New Mexico chapters to help with all the tasks involved in putting on the rendezvous for 2015. Fran also warned that the state would want to hold the gathering in Grant County in 2016. The participating chapters traditionally divvy up the work—one chapter, for example, will put on a breakfast and another will offer a dinner. Meals are often catered, so that's also an option. If you want to go this year, start planning now. Stan added that more details would be available shortly about the time, place, and entry fees. He and Fran will report this information at the GBCH April meeting.

Stan also reported that much of the state meeting was concerned with proposed state and federal legislation about the maintenance and disposal of public lands. (See GBCH minutes from October 2014 for details about federal proposals.) New Mexico itself has periodic fits of desire to take over federal lands on the basis of dubious motivation. The most recent such proposal hopes merely to study the matter—click [here](#) for details. Note that a common needle on the thread running through such New Mexico legislative proposals is the person of Yvette Herrell, a Republican real estate investment specialist from Alamogordo. Her name pops up on several legislative proposals that could presumably result in New Mexico's appropriation of federal lands.

Stan advised that the NMBCH political provocateur is Oscar Simpson, who holds the position of chairman, public lands and legislation for the state BCH. Oscar, Stan advises, is very adamant that if the government starts selling off public lands, it will be the biggest land grab anybody has ever seen. According to Oscar, land will go to oil and mineral interests and if these interests get hold of that land, the land will be closed off to the public. (Ms. Harrell's real estate investment background makes a cynical observer find validity in Oscar's perspective.)

Stan allowed that New Mexico's ranchers aren't on board yet in considering the proposals, but Oscar speculates that the ranchers will discover that their grazing fees will increase. Oscar advises everybody to write to the public officials and express opposition to Ms. Harrell's current proposal and any others that suggest transfer of public lands to private interests.

Gerry Engel commented that in Nevada, the legislature passed a bill to transfer federal lands to the state. He advised that Ms. Herrell's New Mexico bill is currently still in committee (on which the BCH has members, but which does not have members from Grant County) and if it emerges from committee, the legislature will vote on it.

Although Ms. Herrell's current proposal simply recommends studying the issue (and she assures those who inquire that the legislative forces of evil have no intention to transfer public lands to private interests), BCH members will need to pay careful attention to the matter and persuade our own legislators to vote against recommendations for such transfers. Even if the state assumes control of federal lands, eventually the lands will be sold off to defray the costs of managing those lands.

Fran commented that Oscar said, regarding plans to pay off debt by selling off public lands (the matter reported in the GBCH October 2014 minutes), that mining companies will get ahold of pristine land and ruin it. Oscar has offered to come down here and talk about this. Stan's intention now is to bring the matter to our attention. We owe it to ourselves to keep abreast of this and make our feelings known.

Gerry added that none of this would happen overnight. The federal government hasn't approved public land transfers and none of the proposals in the past have ever made it out of committee. According to Supreme Court rulings, Gerry said, the federal government has the right to manage public lands. Whatever the disposition of these nefarious proposals, none of us will ever be affected by it, but our progeny will. The issue is influenced by the fact that the public doesn't have as much support for public lands as has existed in the past. Not so many people go into the forest as they did in the past so the interest in outdoor activities isn't as high as it used to be. That said, we need to maintain an understanding of what is happening.

The various federal legislative proposals, Gerry commented, affect the holdings of the Bureau of Land Management, but exempt wilderness and national parks.

Stan concluded the report by noting that we want to start doing something about this early on. He doesn't think the matter will go anywhere soon, especially since the courts and federal government aren't supportive. Stan's perspective is that the states are putting a lot of effort into nothing.

Fran added that a recent rally in Santa Fe about the public lands proposals gathered 250 people representing sportsmen, followed by another rally of wilderness fans. Rally organizers were willing to pay the lodging expenses of state BCH meeting attendees to encourage people to participate.

The Rawllins contingent will monitor the issue and its associated activities.

Agenda topic *Dutch Oven Competition* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

Doug advised that GBCH has been invited to form a Dutch oven cooking team at an upcoming cook-off on or around April 11, 2015. If a couple of people volunteered to form the team, Mickey and Rawlings Lemon said they would serve as coaches. Cindi deCapiteau and Cheryl Roth volunteered for the team. Doug will send out an email with details.

Gerry expressed disappointment that in past cook-offs, he was so busy cooking and serving that he didn't have time to see what other people were doing—or to sample their food. If it's a team effort, Dixie Dexter suggested, the team could have its own food stash.

Unfortunately, as reported below, the cook-off date conflicts with National Trails Day . . .

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Distribute information about Dutch oven cook-off	Doug Dexter	Some time in March

Agenda topic *Horsemanship sessions* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

Doug queried the group about interest in attending training sessions sponsored by GBCH members. The consensus is that Doug should keep circulating the information about these events.

is knee-deep in roadside trash. GBCH is responsible under the NMDOT's Adopt-a-Highway program for the stretch of US highway 180 between mile markers 108 and 109. We haven't conducted a cleanup in several months—mostly because we tromp up and down the shoulder there and don't find much trash. It's knee deep out there now, so a cleanup detail will occur on Thursday, March 26. Meet at the Wind Canyon fire station at 9:00 a.m., equipped with boots, long pants and sleeves, a hat, gloves, and sunscreen. Cindi deCapiteau will email a reminder as the time draws near.

Doug Dexter announced that the first anniversary is coming up for Silver City's proudly held status as a gateway community for the Continental Divide Trail. The CDT Alliance and the Silver City Arts and Cultural District are coordinating a Trail Fest for our area, tied in with National Trails Day. The plan is to hold a Big Ditch thing for 50 thru-hikers, who will subsequently be shuttled down to the international border to begin their hike. The April 10-12 timeframe provides an opportunity for GBCH to put on a packing demonstration, display photos of past work projects, clear the trail, and deliver water caches. Doug promised to lead on communication with the trails group.

Unfortunately, the dates conflict with the Dutch Oven Cook-off. However, Fran Rawllins noted that it's possible to send out announcements about the Trail Fest and cook-off events and let GBCH members choose which one they want to attend. We could then have a contingent at both functions.

Gerry shared that last year when GBCH members were working on the CDT north from Little Walnut, they met a hiker—a woman who had a three-month-old child in tow. She took a picture of the trail crew. The picture eventually showed up online on the hiker's blog.

Gerry also reported that a move is on to develop a connector trail from the CDT to Bear Mountain Lodge. The president of Western New Mexico University, Dr. Joe Shepard, has formed a group to encourage ranchers out that way to give up land, thereby permitting access to hikers. The idea is that ranchers can deduct the cost of their donations. The effort results in an effort that produces consistency in trail use procedures and maintenance. The group is putting proposals together now for landowners.

Somebody said something that resulted in a discussion about CDT sections closed by last year's Signal Fire. While it's not clear that CDT access from the Signal Peak trailhead is open, access from Meadow Creek is indeed available.

Fran Rawllins noted that she saw an item in the Silver City Sun-News about things to do around here. The article mentioned the Lower Rio Grande BCH chapter, and advised readers to check out the BCH for monthly rides, potluck dinners, and horse camping.

Dixie Dexter announced the nuptials on this day of GBCH members Donna Tillmann and David Allen. Dixie said that if you're so inclined, email them your congratulations.

Randy Roth asked if there had been some discussion about the cost of tickets for the 2014 Christmas party. Jean Hill responded that the chapter lost \$21 on the shindig because the number of attendees was fewer (only 37 people paid for dinner) and facility rental cost was considerably higher than it had been in previous years.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Coordinate the release of information about Trail Fest and the Dutch Oven Cook-off—solicit participants for each	Doug Dexter	Before the end of March

Bank Balance Dec 16, 2014 \$ 3,299.13

Credits

1/15/15 \$.37 interest

Debits

12/16/14 #1274 \$ 460.00 Xmas party facility cost

Bank Balance Jan 15, 2015 \$ 2,839.50

Transactions After last Bank Balance:

Credits

1/16/15 \$ 60.00 Byrum & Bacon membership deposit

2/11/15 \$ 30.00 Chiverton membership deposit

Debits

2/3/15 #1275 \$ 30.00 Xmas party food reimbursed

Bank Balance Feb 11, 2015 \$ 2,869.50

* Xmas party details:

37 people paid for dinner @ \$10 \$370.

One person made a donation to our chapter \$ 25.

The 50/50 raffle and other raffles gave us \$ 74.

\$469.

Our cost for BML was \$460.

food receipts to be reimbursed. \$ 30.

\$490. **\$ 21. net loss**

Membership Update/Email List - we have begun to take off names from our email list for those we know are not renewing this year.

Memberships/General Liability Insurance

After the February meeting we have 42 members, 14 single and 14 family.

In February of 2014 we had 52 members, and at year-end membership was 60.

In February of 2013 we had 53 members, and at year-end membership was 64.

State BCH is gathering membership data to determine how much each chapter will owe for General Liability insurance. In 2014 they assessed our chapter \$308, which was \$5.50 each for all 56 members we had at the point they did the count. Bill is due late May or early June. Stay tuned.....



GILA CHAPTER
SILVER CITY, NM