

# Back Country Horsemen of America

Organizational Handbook For New  
and Established BCHA Organizations  
(Revised 05/2010)



## GOOD BACK COUNTRY MANNERS AND PRACTICES

Back Country Horsemen of America advocates and supports the following good manners and practices when traveling through and camping in the back country:

- **PRACTICE MINIMUM IMPACT CAMPING.** Help maintain our image as responsible back country users. A good back country horseman is a gentle user.
- **OFFER ASSISTANCE** to back country travelers when a need is encountered.
- **PRACTICE GOOD MOUNTAIN MANNERS** and good back country etiquette.
- **PACK OUT YOUR TRASH.** Burn as much as possible, pack out the rest. Plastic items do not burn well and it is best to pack them out, too. If you come upon a dirty camp, clean it up and pack out what you can.
- **DO NOT TIE TO TREES** except while packing or unpacking. Use a picket line placed between two or more trees and over bare mineral soil. If the stock disturbs the top soil, fill in the holes to the original grade.
- **TIE HORSES AWAY FROM CAMPS, TRAILS AND WATER.** Always place picket lines 200 feet from the camp site and trail if at all possible. Scatter or bury all manure that accumulates in the area.
- **DO NOT BATHE IN LAKES OR STREAMS.** Do not allow soap to get into the water. Even biodegradable cleaners leave residues that pollute.
- **DO NOT CUT SWITCH BACKS.** It is forbidden by regulation and could destroy the trail bed due to increased erosion.
- **CONSERVE FIRE WOOD.** Keep your fire rings small and do not waste wood by building large fires. At higher elevations plan on using propane or gasoline stoves.

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## GREETINGS

This booklet is an answer to your inquiry about the Back Country Horseman of America (BCHA).

In the early 1970's the trend toward restrictions on horse use in the back country was becoming apparent. A few farsighted horsemen in Montana understood the eventual implications of this trend and decided to form an organization to represent the interests of saddle and pack stock users. They felt that to be credible and effective, the organization must work in cooperation with the public land agencies that make and administer back country policy. They also felt the need to educate the equine community to become better stewards of the land. Since that time BCHA, has grown into a nationwide organization.

The Back Country Horsemen of America is composed of Back Country Horsemen state member organizations which, in turn, are composed of individual chapters. Representatives from each of the BCHA states make up the National Board of Directors of the Back Country Horsemen of America. In addition there are affiliate member organizations in states that do not have BCH state organizations.

All BCHA members share a common interest - recreational use of horses and mules on the public lands of the United States and our access to that public land. BCHA is one of the few equine organizations which provides an opportunity for recreational stock users to influence the laws, policies, and attitudes that affect our heritage of stock use. We have worked hard in this effort.

Another of our goals has been to create a positive public awareness of recreational stock use. We recognize that the negative attitudes toward horsemen held by some people is sometimes justified. To counter this negativism, BCHA has developed an extensive volunteer work program. The result is a net contribution of over \$7.4 million per year in service to our public land agencies. BCHA implemented a "wild lands ethics" education program as a fundamental activity for not only our own membership but also for other equine users.

Obviously, back country horse use is not the same thing as trail riding. Most riding clubs have their own objectives and while there is a similarity - the enjoyment of horses - the goals of BCHA are far different. For individuals who use saddle and pack stock on our public lands, membership in BCHA is an effective way to protect the right to use public lands from unnecessary restriction or regulation.

Let us hear from you if you have questions about our organization. We are happy to answer your questions. We also welcome your membership in this unique organization.

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If you would like to start a new BCHA organization, this booklet will help you through the process.

The BCHA Expansion Committee

## WHY THIS HANDBOOK?

BCHA is an organization that is concerned about the future of our horse-use heritage in America's back country and public lands. We are an effective educational/service/advocacy national organization and have accepted the challenge of monitoring the management practices of our land management agencies.

We have compiled this handbook to assist individuals with similar beliefs in forming new organizations of BCHA in their respective areas. This information explains our history, mission-objectives and purposes, and some of the methods we have used to successfully achieve our goals.

This handbook also provides a step-by-step process for forming a new BCH organization along with a number of helpful suggestions. Please read this handbook carefully. We hope you will find this information useful. There are certain requirements that must be addressed in forming a new BCH member organization. While we hope this manual is fairly comprehensive, we also realize some questions may not be addressed here.

Please feel free to contact the office of our National Executive Secretary who will answer your concerns and direct you to the Expansion Committee Chair.

Back Country Horsemen of America

Executive Secretary

PO Box 1367

Graham, WA 98338-1367

Toll Free [888]893-5161

Email - [peg@backcountryhorse.com](mailto:peg@backcountryhorse.com)

[www.backcountryhorse.com](http://www.backcountryhorse.com)

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## **BENEFITS OF FORMATION**

There are many benefits to be derived from forming a BCHA member organization. The energies of individual horsemen within an area can be channeled into a powerful organization with considerable influence. Through discussion and the exchange of ideas, the wisdom necessary for sound decisions regarding resource management and horse use will come. Education can help to remedy some of the bad practices of the past, while service work gives an opportunity for actual "on the ground" work that benefits both the horse user and the resource. BCHA is well respected by the land management agencies such as the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) have been signed to enhance the working relationship between our organization and those agencies.

Another benefit is the association with other BCHA member organizations. The exchange of ideas and information can be very valuable. The collaboration of the BCH member organizations to achieve a common goal is often important. Collectively, BCH member organizations can form a strong lobby, should the need arise.

The social benefits of any healthy organization also apply to BCH member organizations. The companionship of people with similar interests - projects, rides, barbecues, educational programs, and other events will help keep the organization vigorous and active.

Being a Back Country Horseman also helps the individual member. Association with other horsemen can enhance one's skill, expand riding opportunities, and make recreational equine use a much more enjoyable activity. Perhaps the most important benefit to the individual is the satisfaction of helping protect our public lands and preserve the place of the horse in our national heritage.

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## **Mission Statement**

### **OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES**

The purpose of this organization shall be:

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and Wilderness areas.
2. To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
3. To assist the various government, state and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state back country horsemen's organizations.

It was the original intent that Back Country Horsemen of America would be a different type of organization, not the usual special interest one would normally find operating as a protest group. It was felt that a service organization, doing work in the back country, would lend credibility to the group when it became involved in issues of agency management.

It was also recognized that some of the complaints against back country horse use were justified. Therefore, it was determined that an educational program should be a fundamental principle of the organization.

As a result, service and education joined by a determination to protect our heritage of back country stock use became the composites of the "purpose" printed above. Our name was chosen because it signified an interest in much more than just wilderness. Back Country Horsemen are interested in perpetuating recreational stock use on virtually all public lands.

The focus of BCHA is limited to the stated objectives and purpose. This has been reaffirmed many times by the National Board of Directors. While there are many non-equine related issues in which an organization can become involved, it is imperative that the guiding principal must be "how does the issue relate to the mission (objectives and purposes) of BCHA?"

If this question cannot be satisfactorily answered, there should be no involvement. Many other worthwhile organizations already exist to provide action programs on other issues, so anyone interested in those will have adequate opportunity to become active.

## HISTORY

Back Country Horsemen's cornerstone was laid on a firm foundation of research and planning. A small nucleus of back country horse users developed and modified the original goals espoused by horsemen.

The actual formation of BCH took place in Montana's Flathead Valley in January 1973. Since then, our progress is a matter of record, and it is a record of which we are very proud. We have used our specialized knowledge of stock and the back country to bring about changes and modifications of public lands management. We have participated in many agency meetings and land use planning sessions, and have become a strong voice for continued, responsible horse use. We have arrived at our position through extensive research and discussion. This responsible approach has assured us of valid consideration regarding regulations and planning and has given us the support of other conservation groups.

Growth of the Back Country Horsemen organization continued with formation of additional chapters in Montana. In 1979, these chapters and one from Salmon, Idaho, formed the Back Country Horsemen of America. Three more Montana chapters and another chapter from Idaho were added in the next few years.

The Back Country Horsemen of Washington was incorporated in 1977 and developed an informal liaison with the Montana and Idaho Back Country Horsemen. In 1981, a California organization was formed known as the High Sierra Stock Users. After several years of discussion, the four groups decided to merge, using the "Back Country Horsemen of America" name. A constitution was drafted in 1985 and adopted in 1986. It provided that the governing body of this new organization would be a board of directors with two directors elected from each state. Montana, Idaho, California and Washington Back Country Horsemen became the BCHA. Since that time there has been steady growth outside the four founding state organizations. New Back Country Horsemen organizations have been formed in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Nationwide there are over 180 chapters in 27 states with an enrollment of over 13,000 members.

Check the website for updates: [www.backcountryhorse.com](http://www.backcountryhorse.com)

## WHAT DOES BCHA DO FOR YOU?

Affiliation with Back Country Horsemen of America identifies us as a responsible voice for recreational stock use on public lands. This representation goes far beyond our local community and the trails we ride.

BCHA is recognized on a regional and national level as a leader in low impact horse use education. To support this movement, our organization publishes the pocket-sized *Back Country Horsemen Guidebook* and numerous other informational pamphlets and videos. Many of our members have been active participants in the "Leave No Trace" wild lands ethic movement as related to horse use. Some of these members have become master LNT trainers whose role is to spread this ethic to our membership. Informational materials on this subject are available from the office of our Executive Secretary and are available to local and state organizations, public land management agencies, and the general public.

BCHA has been ongoing in the effort to enhance our visibility at the regional and national level by participating in activities such as wilderness seminars, national park symposiums, and trail conferences. We have representation in organizations such as the American Horse Council, the Continental Divide Trail Alliance Board of Directors and affiliate status with other trail advocacy organizations such as The Coalition for Recreational Trails, American Trails, The Partnership for the National Trails System, and the National Recreational Trails Training Partnership, and The Wilderness Society.

To better monitor and influence agency policies, the BCHA National Board of Directors has created the Public Liaison Committee whose responsibility is to work with the upper level of agency management. Participation with agency personnel at all levels has provided us with a vertical integration of our objectives and purpose from our home area to Washington, D.C. and has enabled us to have influence over management decisions.

To assist state and local BCHA member organizations in dealing with complex land management issues, the BCHA National Board has created the Public Lands Committee at the national level to disseminate information and provide technical support. A Legal Fund has also been established to assist the state and national BCH in litigation when it is deemed necessary to bring the agencies into compliance with the laws and policies prescribed by Congress regarding public land management as it affects horse use.

As a communication tool, BCHA publishes a quarterly newsletter which is circulated to all members. Complimentary copies also go to the land management agencies and to our national legislators in the states having

BCHA organizations. This National Newsletter covers issues critical to our mission and also contains feature articles, chapter and state news, stories, poems, and other items of interest to horsemen.

The National BCHA organization holds a 501-(c) (3) non profit tax status. With this tax exempt status, donors can make charitable contributions and take a tax deduction on their tax return.

The National Board of Directors has also created the Back Country Horsemen Education Foundation of America under the IRS code 501- (c) (3). This also qualifies the organization to receive private and public grant money. These funds can be used for specific educational and service purposes. The Foundation can also be used as a "pass through" of funds from state or chapter organizations so long as the moneys are used for specific projects in keeping with the objectives of the Foundation. Contact the National BCHA Office for information.

In the area of expansion, BCHA supports the efforts of groups to organize by providing organizational material, personal contact, and advice from the National Office.

In summary, BCHA works to keep public lands open and accessible for recreational saddle and pack stock use.

## **EDUCATION AND SERVICE**

The national office has many good articles, pamphlets, booklets, and audio/visual aids for BCHA member organizations to use in their educational endeavors. Subject matter covers a wide variety of topics. Many of these items are available free of charge or at a very reasonable cost. An important part of the BCHA mission is the education of our members and other back country visitors about the wise and sustaining use of our back country resource. We can also educate all trail users about back country etiquette and low-impact camping. Local and regional US Forest Service, National Parks and Bureau of Land Management offices often have good information relating to recreation in the back country. Each new organization should introduce itself to these local agencies and ask to be placed on the agency mailing list. Representation by the recreational stock user in public land management is very important at the local level.

Volunteer service in the back country is a dominate part of the BCHA mission. BCHA members have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer work each year. They have used their own vehicles, saddle and pack stock, equipment, and financial resources to enhance recreational horse opportunities on public lands and to protect the natural resource. This

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"hands on" work includes trail and trailhead maintenance and construction, horse packing, fish stocking, fire support, search and rescue, youth

programs, and a multitude of educational activities for both members and the general public.

The success of the BCHA volunteer program is the result of the cooperative relationship local members and BCH chapters and affiliates have developed with the land management agencies. Each BCH chapter or affiliate must develop that cooperative relationship with its public land agencies for effective volunteer service work. "Hands on" experience in trailhead and trail maintenance and construction along with other public lands service work is gratifying, while encouraging sensitivity to our back country resources.

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## TRAILS AND PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Concern about the possibility of losing the traditional right to use saddle and pack stock in the back country was the primary reason for the formation of the Back Country Horsemen of America. BCHA is committed to ensuring that public lands remain open to recreational stock use by assisting the agencies responsible for the management of these lands. To work toward this end, it is often necessary for horsemen to take the initiative in communicating with agency personnel. To best accomplish this, it is suggested that every BCH organization create a working Public Lands Committee to specifically deal with this objective.

Local BCH chapters, generally members of the BCH's Public Lands Committee, must first determine the agency responsible for the management of the lands related to recreational horse use in their area - Forest Service (US and state), Natural Resource Board, US Bureau of Land Management, US Park Service, etc. BCH representatives should contact the managing agency to speak directly to the person in charge - District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, Recreational Specialist, Trails Coordinator. Express an interest in working cooperatively with the agency on items of mutual concern. Ask to be placed on the communication list for information dealing with matters of interest to recreational horsemen.

Face to face communication is vital and it is wise to meet agency personnel and become acquainted. Building a personal relationship can improve the working relationship. It is also important to maintain contact with agency personnel on a regular basis. On-going communication can be valuable for providing input early in the decision making process on most issues.

Experience has shown that the ability to affect change is best done early in the planning process. After management policies are written down - "cast in stone", it is often too late or very difficult to change the direction of the action. Communication on issues is best done after contact and dialogue has been previously established with the appropriate decision makers. Know your facts and "look before you leap". Be prepared to offer help by following the BCHA objectives of service work and education. As in all government affairs, there will be give and take. Keep your cool, remain positive. Request the opportunity to offer input about horse related management issues. Ask agency personnel to participate in BCH activities and projects as a method of building relationships and creating good will.

Become familiar with the processes - National Environmental Policy Act, Limits of Acceptable Change Planning process, Forest Planning - used in making agency decisions. A common comment from agency personnel is

lack of representation by horsemen. We cannot expect agency personnel or other user groups to work in our best interests without our active participation and input. No one will speak for horse users except horsemen.

Be persistent. Often the agency wheels turn very slowly. Follow through. Don't "lose heart" if a decision goes against the best interests of horsemen. Be better prepared for the next issue. And don't be surprised if the same issue recycles. As management changes, decisions may be reconsidered and plans re-worked.

Take a positive stance on issues related to horse use and avoid negative positions against other user groups or the agencies. Sharing of our public lands is often necessary and cooperation with other user groups can often work to the benefit of all.

There is no "silver bullet" for resolving issues, just commitment, involvement, and persistence.

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS

BCHA provides for individual memberships when there are no available chapters, affiliates, or state organizations. Individuals who wish to join Back Country Horsemen of America can become "At Large" members by sending dues in the amount of \$45 to: Back Country Horsemen of America, P.O. Box 1367, Graham, WA 98338

These dues will provide membership in BCHA, a subscription to the quarterly BCHA newsletter, and a copy of the BCHA Guidebook.

## AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE

We urge you to consider organizing a BCHA member organization in your area. Your efforts may be needed to preserve recreational equine use on public lands. Perhaps you are interested in volunteer work projects that will enhance riding opportunities in your area, or maybe you would just like to band together with other folks of similar interests. Whatever the reason and if you plan to form a new BCHA member organization, there is assistance available from Back Country Horsemen of America.

1. We will provide newsletters, brochures, and other information which can be distributed to prospective members. New members are immediately placed on the mailing list of the National Newsletter.
2. We will attempt to provide a qualified speaker or program for groups that are considering the formation of a new BCHA member organization. If we cannot send a personal representative, this information can be supplied via video. Our national office is always available to answer phone calls or email concerning organizational matters. We can "walk" you through the organizational process to be sure there are few "hitches".
3. After a BCH member organization has organized, the first few months are critical to the success of the organization. You can draw on the knowledge and experience of our vast BCHA membership to provide help and suggestions for your success. The "wheel" has already been invented in almost every facet of BCHA operation. Take advantage of this knowledge.
4. If you need assistance, we will do our best to provide help. Remember your responsibility is to ask. We want you to succeed.

You will never have a meeting as important as your first one. Its success or failure will hinge primarily on the amount and type of preparation that is done prior to the meeting. Here are some suggestions for planning a meeting to organize.

1. Timing is important. Summer, fall, and holiday seasons are not good times to organize because people are overly involved in other activities. January through May is the most opportune time. Select your meeting times carefully to avoid date conflicts which might affect attendance.
2. Prior to a general meeting, round up a core group of five to ten people who can hold a preliminary planning session. One or two people can do this, but it will be much easier if there were a larger group involvement at this stage of the planning. Invite a member from National BCHA, your state BCHA organization, or from a neighboring BCH chapter or unit to meet with this core group and have them thoroughly explain the objectives and purposes of BCHA. Members of the core group must believe in the mission of BCHA and agree on its Mission, Objectives and Purposes. Members of the core group can then go out and "sell" BCHA and the need for a BCH organization in your area.
3. Be sure your core group is diversified and represents your community. A diversified group makes for the strongest organization.
4. Include both men and women in the group. Experience has shown that women are some of the strongest supporters, best leaders, and most dependable workers.
5. Plan for a general organization meeting with your core group.
6. Get out publicity for this organizational meeting. Utilize all members of your core group. It is not difficult if the load is shared.

- Place BCHA posters in tack shops, feed stores, riding stables, horse barns, vet clinics, where ever they will be noticed by horsemen.
- Use radio talk shows or community announcements to promote the general meeting and explain what BCHA is all about.
- Use the "Community Event" listing in your local newspaper to advertise the general meeting.

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- **MOST IMPORTANT - WORD OF MOUTH** Have each member of the core group contact three or four people with mutual interests and ask them to attend the general organizational meeting.
- Get word about the meeting to adjoining towns and rural areas. Smaller communities may have difficulty in supporting a group of their own but can be a strong contributor to a centralized group.

7. Set a date at the core meeting for the general organizational meeting including time and location.

- Arrange for a meeting room large enough to accommodate the expected crowd - 30 to 90 people.
- Schedule the organizational meeting within a week or 10 days after advertising the event.
- Strike while everyone is enthusiastic!
- Emphasize that BCHA is a family organization and invite spouses and children.
- Make arrangements to have local media coverage of the meeting.

8. At the core group meeting discuss potential nominees for officers. Get a commitment from people who will serve and arrange for members in the audience at the general meeting to nominate them. It is hard to get people to serve as officers under short notice. Select a temporary chairman to conduct the organizational meeting and a temporary secretary to take minutes. Develop an agenda for the meeting.

9. For the organizational meeting have a representative from the state organization or a neighboring chapter, who is well versed on BCHA, give a "sales talk" explaining the history, mission, and value of becoming a BCHA organization. Follow with a question and answer session.

10. As soon as the informational program is concluded, the temporary chair should do the following:

- Ask the audience if it wants to organize a BCH organization at this time.

- Assuming the answer is yes:
  - Elect an interim slate of officers by calling for nominations from the floor.
  - After a slate of officers is elected turn the meeting over to them. Discuss and decide on a name for the organization. Remember the words "Back Country Horsemen" must be a part of the new name. Receive motions and then vote on the name.
  - Discuss and set membership dues. Set a reasonable amount keeping in mind that the dues set will ultimately be split among local, state and national. Begin collecting dues immediately and appoint a committee to set a working budget.
  - Select a committee or individual to review the included set of by-laws and make the changes necessary to reflect the new organization. These by-laws can then be presented and formally adopted at a future meeting.
  - Offer a list of permanent committees. Ask for volunteers to head these committees or appoint. A Public Lands committee should definitely be one of these working groups.
  - Discuss and decide on ways of communication with the membership - a newsletter, telephone calling or email tree, local news media, etc. Select someone (s) to handle this responsibility. Remember "communication, communication, communication" is essential to the success of the organization.
  - Decide on a regular meeting date, time, and place (we suggest monthly general membership meetings).
11. And finally, discuss ideas for making your new BCHA organization interesting and fun. Plan activities which will help you grow both in membership and enthusiasm by spreading the word to friends, neighbors and relatives. It will take time to evolve, but you now have a running start.

## REQUIREMENTS TO FORM A BCH ORGANIZATION

Forming a BCH organization is not difficult; however, there are a number of requirements. First, those interested in creating an organization must subscribe to the objectives and the purposes of the Back Country Horsemen of America as outlined on page 7. Those purposes do not preclude other interests, but a saddle club that may take an occasional trail ride is not a BCHA organization.

### Classifications:

There are three organizational classifications under the BCH mantle.

1. A **state** organization is a coalition of two or more membership chapters within a state. A state must have at least two chapters with a minimum of 40 members and with no less than 15 members in any one membership unit. To become an official BCHA state, a coalition of chapters must band together, approve by-laws, make application and receive formal acceptance from the National Board of Directors of BCHA. State organizations have voting rights on the National Board of Directors of BCHA.

2. An **affiliate** organization is a single membership organization within a state which does not have an official BCH state organization. An affiliate must have a minimum of 15 members. To become an official BCH affiliate, a membership organization must make application and receive formal acceptance from the National Board of Directors of BCHA. Affiliates have a voice but no voting rights on the National Board of Directors.

A single membership organization cannot become a stand-alone affiliate if its state already has a state organization. It can only join BCH as a chapter of that state. Within two years after there are two or more affiliates in a state, they must then form a state organization by making application to the National Board of Directors. Then they then become "chapters" of their state organization.

3. A **chapter** organization is a single membership organization within a state which has an official BCH state organization. A chapter should have a membership of at least 15 members or meet the membership requirements of their state. To become a chapter of a state, a membership organization must make application and receive acceptance from its state organization.

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### Steps to follow in the application process:

There are several common steps that need to be followed in the application process regardless of the type of classification.

Step 1. Develop a governing set of by-laws (By-Laws included in this handbook).

Step 2. Create a membership - see qualifications above.

Step 3. Elect officers.

Step 4. Set and collect dues and/or application fees.

Step 5. Develop an application package.

- application (sample on page 16).
- copy of the organization's by-laws.
- a list of officers and directors with mailing and email addresses, and phone numbers, (directors are your representatives to the state or national board of directors.).
- a list of members with mailing and email (when applicable) addresses and appropriate application fee.

Step 6. Submit the application

- chapter applications go to your state organization
- affiliate or state applications go to the National Executive Secretary at:

Back Country Horsemen of America  
P.O. Box 1367  
Graham, WA 98338-1367

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP To the Back Country Horsemen of America**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED,**

That the \_\_\_\_\_, a group desiring membership as an affiliate or state organization in the Back Country Horsemen of America, hereby agrees to adhere to the objectives and purposes as established in the Constitution of the Back Country Horsemen of America. It is agreed that we will be privileged to use the name "Back Country Horsemen". At such time as our group is an organized affiliate or state organization and is accepted for membership by Back Country Horsemen of America, we will be presented a membership charter.

We understand that Back Country Horsemen of America reserves the right to revoke our charter by vote of the National Board if our organization does not continue to abide by the Constitution of the Back Country Horsemen of America. At such time we would no longer be privileged to use the name "Back Country Horsemen" and enjoy the privileges of membership.

We understand that there is a fee for application of \$150 which includes the first year's dues.

Affiliate/State Organization

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Office\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

**GOVERNING DOCUMENTS**

Every BCHA organization - affiliate, chapter or state - must develop a governing document (by-laws). These will be the management rules under which your organization operates. This document is also necessary for application to the National Board of Directors of BCHA to become a BCH state organization or a BCH affiliate organization. It is necessary for application to your state organization to become a chapter, providing your state has formed and has been accepted as an official BCH state by the National Board of Directors.

BCHA has specific requirements that must be included in the writing of your by-laws.

First, Article I needs to be a sentence naming your organization. The words "Back Country Horsemen" must be included in this name. Example - The name of this organization shall be the Whispering Pines Back Country Horsemen of (your state).

Second, you must include as Article II - Purpose, the five guiding purposes of BCHA as written in the BCHA Constitution. These are the same five principles stated in the Constitution of the national organization - the purposes that were drafted by the founders of BCHA and have stood the test of time. The objectives and purposes of BCHA were presented at the beginning of this Handbook and again here:

**Objectives and Purposes**

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and Wilderness areas.
2. To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
3. To assist the various government, state and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.

4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state back country horsemen's organizations.

Some states require that nonprofit organizations such as BCHA file articles of incorporation with their Secretary of State. This is not a requirement for becoming a member of BCHA and need not be submitted as part of the application package.

### BY-LAWS

The following are copies of by-laws that have proven to work well for our organization at both the state and local levels. No need to "reinvent the wheel". **Remember, this is a volunteer organization and the decision making should rest in the hands of the membership. These by-laws reflect as much.**

**Other words of advice:** Do not list a dues amount in your by-laws. Your financial needs will change as well as your dues. Such things as setting the amount of your dues can best be achieved via a vote of the membership at a regular meeting rather than by a revision of the by-laws.

Conduct your meetings in accordance to the general practices such as those outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order*. Well run meetings will make you more productive and keep you out of trouble.

### (your name)BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF (your state)

Adopted, April 20\_\_

#### ARTICLE I-NAME

The name of this affiliate/Chapter, which is a non-profit organization, shall be the  
(your name) Back Country Horsemen of (your state)

#### ARTICLE II-PURPOSE

The purpose of this organization shall be:

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and Wilderness areas.
2. To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
3. To assist the various government, state and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new back country horsemen's organizations.

#### ARTICLE III-MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership shall be open to anyone who is committed to the purposes of \_\_BCH as stated in ARTICLE II.

Section 2. The membership classifications shall be "Single", "Family", and "Associate". (It is not necessary to have the "associate" category.)

Section 3. Membership shall correspond to the calendar year - January 1 through December 31.

#### ARTICLE IV-DUES

Section 1. Dues shall be determined by majority vote of the membership. Dues shall be payable on the first day of January of each year. Dues shall be considered delinquent when not paid within three months of the January date. Delinquency in payment of the annual dues shall remove a member from "good standing" and said member shall relinquish all voting rights and privileges.

Section 2. The holding of any office or membership on any committee shall be contingent upon the member being in "good standing".

#### **ARTICLE V-VOTING**

Section 1. Single and associate members shall be entitled to one voting right. Family members shall carry two voting rights. Only members in good standing [dues paid] may exercise the right to vote on matters of chapter business.

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Section 2. Associate members may, at the time of membership application or renewal, designate one person who will be considered their voting member.

Section 3. A simple majority of members in good standing, voting when the organization is in session, shall be required to conduct that business requiring group action, providing a quorum is present.

Section 4. Twelve (12) members shall constitute a quorum for transaction of legal business. (This depends on the size of your organization.)

#### **ARTICLE VI-MEETINGS**

Section 1. Regular meetings shall be established and held at a time and place decided by a majority vote of the membership.

Section 2. Special meetings may be called by the President or upon written request signed by any three (3) voting members.

Section 3. Notice shall be given to voting members of all meetings.

#### **ARTICLE VII-OFFICERS**

Section 1. The officers of the affiliate/Chapter shall consist of a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, and such other officers as the voting membership may create.

Section 2. The election of officers shall be conducted at the January meeting in accordance with ARTICLE IX of these by-laws.

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Section 3. Any vacancy in an office shall be filled by special election except for that of President which shall automatically be filled by the Vice President.

(For Chapters) Section 4. (Select an appropriate number) directors and an alternate shall be elected by the membership at the annual meeting to serve as a chapter representative to the state Board of Directors. These directors shall serve staggered two year terms.

NOTE-Section 4 above pertains to the selection of chapter directors for the State Board of Directors in those states that have a state organization. However, if your state does not have a state organization and you are forming an affiliate of BCHA, you still need to select one director and an alternate whose duty will be to attend the National Board meeting and serve as the liaison between the affiliate and the National Board of Directors. The reason for an alternate is in the event the regular director cannot serve, the alternate can automatically fill the vacancy.

#### **ARTICLE VIII - DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

Section 1. The power and authority of this organization shall be vested in the membership. The officers shall conform to the wishes and instructions of the membership; and subject to the rules of this document, manage and execute the affairs of the organization. When the organization is not in session, the officers shall have all needful authority to manage the activities of the organization.

Section 2. The President, or his representative, shall preside at all meetings. The President shall appoint committee chairmen and shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. The President may co-sign checks for the disbursement of funds. The President shall be responsible for all communication between the state and/or national organization.

Section 3. The Vice President shall perform the duties of the President when absent, or by request. The Vice President may also co-sign checks for the disbursement of funds. The Vice President shall serve as the coordinator with the state and/or national organization.

Section 4. The Secretary shall record and keep the minutes of all regular and special meetings, shall register and keep current membership lists, be responsible for the recording of all volunteer hours, and perform such other duties as pertains to this office.

Section 5. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the financial control of all affiliate/Chapter funds. The Treasurer shall give financial reports to the membership on a regular basis, shall keep financial records of income

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and expenditures suitable for audit, shall assist in the formation of an annual budget, shall collect dues, and maintain a "good standing" membership list. The Treasurer shall be one of the co-signers of the checks for the disbursement of funds.

Section 6. The affiliate /Chapter directors shall represent the affiliate/Chapter at (state and/or) national board meeting. The chapter directors represent the chapter on the state board of directors. The director shall be responsible for the flow of information to and from the (state and/or) national organization.

#### **ARTICLE IX-ELECTIONS**

Section 1. Officers and directors shall be elected at the January meeting and will assume office at the next regular meeting. Officers shall serve through the January meeting of the following year. Officers shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. Directors may serve multiple terms.  
Section 2. A nominating committee of at least three members shall be appointed by the President at least two months prior to the general election. (Some organizations elect the members of the nominating committee rather than have them appointed by the President. This is done to avoid favoritism.)  
Section 3. The nominating committee shall select a slate of candidates for the officers and director positions to be voted on at the general election. The slate shall be presented at the regular December meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor during the election.

#### **ARTICLE X-COMMITTEES**

Section 1. Committees, necessary for the functioning of the affiliate/Chapter, shall be created by the President with the approval of the membership.  
NOTE- Committees can be both standing (permanent) or temporary and should be created to meet the individual needs of the affiliate/Chapter. The following list of standing committees is a suggestion - Public Lands, Activities, Service, Education, Public Relations, Membership, Health and Safety. The national organization recommends that every affiliate/Chapter have a standing public lands committee listed as part of their by-laws. This committee is key for working with the land management agencies on issues of both local and national importance. It is advisable to list your committees in the by-laws so be sure to include a brief job description of each under

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#### **ARTICLE X.**

Section 2. Committee chairmen shall be appointed by the President with the approval of the membership. Vacancies of a committee chairman shall be filled by appointment by the affiliate/chapter President. (Some affiliates/Chapter elect their committee chairman)

Section 3. Committee chairmen shall select members as necessary to accomplish the functions of the committee. (Avoid committees of one!)

#### **ARTICLE XI - REMOVAL**

Section 1. Any officer or member whose conduct has not been in the best interests of the affiliate may be removed from participation in affiliate activities by a two-thirds vote of the membership at a regular meeting.  
Section 2. Notification of intent to remove an officer or member must be made known at the regular meeting preceding the meeting that the action is to take place.  
Section 3. An officer or member who is removed must be informed in writing of the action taken by the membership.

#### **ARTICLE XII-AMENDMENTS**

Section 1. These by-laws may be amended at any regular or special meeting by a majority vote, provided notice of such proposed amendment and a "first reading" be given to the membership at a regular meeting preceding the vote on the amendment.

By-laws adopted this day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_  
Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

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## **BY-LAWS FOR A BCH STATE ORGANIZATION**

When there are two or more BCHA affiliates in a state, they must organize to become a BCHA state organization. A governing document in the form of by-laws must be developed and submitted to the Back Country Horsemen of America as part of the application process.

BCHA has specific requirements which must be included in the writing of state by-laws. First, Article I must have a sentence naming the organization which includes the words "Back Country Horsemen of (your state)". Second, you must include as Article II - Purpose, the five guiding purposes of BCHA as they appear in the sample below. These are the same five purposes stated in the Constitution of the National Organization - the purposes that were drafted by the founders and have stood the test of time. Some states require that non-profit organizations such as Back Country Horsemen file articles of incorporation with their state government. This is not a requirement for becoming a state organization and need not be submitted as part of the application package. A 501 c-3 or c-4 IRS classification is also not a requirement.

The following is a set of by-laws which must be used by affiliates in the writing of the governing document required to become an official organization.

### **BY LAWS OF THE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF (YOUR STATE)**

#### **ARTICLE I-NAME**

The name of this organization shall be the Back Country Horsemen of (your state) hereinafter referred to as the BCH of (your state), and shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of ( ) as a non-profit, educational organization. The administrative body of the BCH of (your state) shall be hereinafter referred to as the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall be composed of Directors from each member chapter/unit.

#### **ARTICLE II Purpose**

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and Wilderness areas.
2. To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.

3. To assist the various government, state and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.

4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.

5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state back country horsemen's organizations.

#### **ARTICLE III-Membership**

Section 1. Chapters are formed within the state by making application to the Board of Directors of the state organization. Any chapter seeking membership must adopt the purposes of the BCH of (your state) as stated in Article II.

Section 2. The chapter application for membership must include:

- a. The name which must include the wording \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of (your state)".
- b. A copy of the chapter's working by-laws.
- c. A list of officers.
- d. A membership of at least 15 individuals.
- e. Applicable dues.

Section 3. Membership as a chapter in the BCH of (your state) must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors of (your state) at an assembled meeting.

Section 4. Chapter membership may be revoked by the Board of Directors for conduct by the chapter or its members on behalf of the chapter, which is contrary to the mission of the Back Country Horsemen of (your state) or adversely reflects on the integrity of the organization. Revocation shall be by a three-fourths vote of the Board of Directors in attendance at an assembled meeting. Notice of the proposed revocation vote shall be made to all member chapters 30 days prior to the vote. A revoked chapter's right to use the name "Back Country Horsemen" or similar name in any way, will terminate.

Section 5. Individuals, families, or other groups who subscribe to the purposes of the organization and who wish to affiliate with the BCH of (your state) but who do not belong to a local chapter may become a "member

at large" of the state organization. These members shall be excluded from any voting rights or leadership positions in the BCHA of (your state), but shall be provided with all other benefits of membership.

Section 6. The membership and fiscal year of this organization and all chapters shall be the calendar year.

#### **ARTICLE IV-Dues**

Section 1. The Board of Directors of the BCH of (your state) shall set dues applicable to the state and national requirements.

Section 2. Each member chapter shall submit no later than January 31, a report of chapter membership as of December 31 of the preceding calendar year, along with the payment of appropriate state and national dues.

#### **ARTICLE V-Powers and Duties**

Section 1. The supreme authority of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be in its assembled voting delegates.

The State Board of Directors shall execute this authority when the voting delegates are not assembled, but shall follow the direction given them by the delegates and shall be responsible to them.

Section 2. The voting delegates shall have equal representation from each chapter and shall decide State BOD policy and give direction to the State Board of Directors at the annual convention/meeting. They shall also have the powers and duties contained elsewhere in this constitution.

Section 3. Powers of the annual convention/meeting – The annual convention/meeting provided for in Article V hereof, shall have inclusive power to enact, repeal or amend the constitution or by-laws of \_\_\_\_\_. The annual convention/meeting may, by resolution, take any action not inconsistent with law or \_\_\_\_\_ constitution and by-laws.

Section 4. Powers of the State Board of Directors – The State Board of Directors shall have power to take any action not inconsistent with law or \_\_\_\_\_ constitution and by-laws, or any duly enacted resolution of the annual convention/meeting.

Section 5. The Board of Directors shall be charged with the duties of distributing pertinent information, providing a clearing house for actions and ideas, and representing the state organization on a national scale. It shall assist and coordinate with local chapters in their efforts and provide help and direction.

Section 6. The SBD shall elect two (2) members to the National Board of Directors of the Back Country Horsemen of America. National Board members shall be elected for a two (2) year term with each board position elected in alternate years. The SBD shall elect one (1) Alternate National Director annually.

Section 7. It shall be agreed that policies and issues may have different effects in different communities. Therefore, member organizations may publicly oppose the position taken by the state organization regarding controversial issues.

#### **ARTICLE VI-Board of Directors**

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall consist of (number) directors from each member chapter, the immediate past Board Chairman, and the state representatives to the National Board of Directors. Each member chapter shall also select one alternate director to serve in the absence of their regular director. Each regular chapter or alternate directors shall represent the membership of the local chapter from which elected.

Section 2. In the event that a regular director's absence becomes permanent, the alternate director shall advance to the permanent position to serve the balance of the replaced director's term.

Section 3. Member chapters shall elect their directors to the state Board of Directors for staggered terms except for their alternate who shall be elected on an annual basis.

Section 4. Each chapter elected director shall have one vote on the Board of Directors. When a chapter elected director to the state Board of Directors is selected as State Chairman, that chapter shall be entitled to a voting replacement on the state Board of Directors for the person moving into the chairmanship position.

Section 5. The Board of Directors shall meet quarterly, but may meet as often as necessary to conduct the business of the organization. Written notice of meeting shall be sent to the chapter officers and delegates at least 30 days prior to the meeting date. These notices shall contain the known business agenda, however, other items of business may be added to the agenda at the time of the meeting. Special meetings shall be approved by the Board of Directors.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Annual Convention/meeting**

Section 1. The annual convention/meeting of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be held at such a time and place as is established by the voting delegates presiding at the annual convention/meeting.

Section 2. Attendance - Any member in good standing with any affiliated chapter may attend any annual convention/meeting and have floor privileges, but they shall not solely by reason of such membership be entitled to vote.

Section 3. At the annual meeting the host chapter may assess and collect registration fees of attending members. The purpose of this assessment will be to cover expenses incurred by the host chapter for local arrangements, etc.

Section 4. All annual meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert Rules of Order.

Section 5. It shall be the responsibility of State Board of Directors to develop the agenda for the annual meeting. For inclusion in the agenda, local chapters must submit their agenda items before the regular State Board of Directors meeting, prior to the annual convention/meeting. Copies of local agenda items shall be sent to local chapters by the State Board of Directors one (1) month prior to meeting date.

Section 6. Each voting delegate must be a member in good standing of an affiliated chapter and show evidence that the delegate is authorized as voting delegate by said chapter.

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Section 7. A voting delegate may represent only one affiliated chapter.

Section 8. Delegates to the annual convention/meeting shall consist of eight (8) delegates from each affiliated chapter. Each chapter shall provide the chair with a list of these delegates prior to the meeting. All delegates shall be entitled to vote on all questions properly brought before the convention.

Section 9. Fifty percent of all duly accredited delegates shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of business. A simple majority of delegates in attendance can conduct business.

Section 10. Special measures, namely a vote to enact, repeal or amend the constitution or by-laws, must be passed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all delegates in attendance.

Section 11. The Chairman of the State Board of \_\_\_\_\_ shall preside over business affairs of the annual convention/meeting.

Section 12. Membership assessment – Member chapters may be assessed membership dues for the following year as determined and approved at the annual meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the attending delegates will be required. Dues will be due on or before January 1st and delinquent by February 1st each year. Delinquent chapters will lose their right to vote.

## **ARTICLE VIII-Officers and Duties**

Section 1. The officers of the Board of Directors shall consist of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, National Directors, and such other officers as the assembled board members shall create. All positions shall be elected by and from the elected chapter directors for a term of two years. No officers may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same position. The officers and National Directors shall assume office at the conclusion of the meeting at which they are elected.

Section 2. Elected officers to the state Board of Directors and National Directors who are not re-elected by their respective chapter may complete their terms of office at the state level and until such time as their term at *Page 32* the state level expires. However, their right to vote on state board matters will be revoked and the voting right as a director will be passed to the newly elected chapter representative.

Section 3. The Chairman of the Board will have no voting privileges except to resolve a tie vote of the Board of Directors.

Section 4. The Chairman shall be the chief administrative officer of the BCH of (your state) whose main responsibility is to provide leadership to the organization. Specific duties shall include:

- a. Serve as the official spokesman for the BCH of (your state).
- b. Authorize BCH statements having state significance.
- c. Sign all official BCH of (your state) documents.
- d. Delegate duties and responsibilities.
- e. Establish lines of communication with other BCHA entities.
- f. Provide direction/assistance to chapter members.
- f. Preside over all assembled meetings of the Board of Director.
- g. Assist the Board of Directors, committees, and chapter members in developing and maintaining sound financial practices.
- h. Co-sign on all disbursements.
- j. Create committees and appoint committee chairs subject to Board approval.
- k. Relegate responsibility to committees.
- l. Serve as ex-officio on all committees.
- m. And such other duties as normal to the office of the Chairman.

Section 5. The Vice Chairman shall:

- a. Assist the Chairman and assume duties of the Chairman when the Chairman is absent.
- b. Be responsible for new chapter expansion and membership development and may create a committee for such purposes.
- c. Be responsible for the collection of all volunteer hours and the reporting of such to the National Executive Secretary or other appropriate National officers.
- d. And such other duties as normal to the office of the Vice Chairman.

Section 6. The Secretary shall:

- a. Record and permanently file the minutes of all Board of Directors meetings.
- b. Furnish copies of these minutes to board members and to member chapters.

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- c. Assist the Chairman in preparing agendas for all assembled meeting of the Board of Directors.
- d. Furnish members of the state Board of Directors with a current list of officers and delegates from all member chapters.

- e. Quarterly furnish the Executive Secretary of the Back Country Horsemen of America with a list of all Back Country Horsemen members from (your state). This list shall include the members mailing addresses for the national newsletter.
- f. Send written notice of all meetings of the Board of Directors to the chapter presidents and delegates to the Board.
- g. And such other duties as normal to the office of the Secretary.

Section 7. The Treasurer shall:

- a. The Treasurer shall safeguard all monies relative to the BCH of (your state).
- b. Develop and maintain a system of accounting to include records of income, expenses, and the disbursement of all monies.
- c. Provide financial reports - balance sheets and statements of operation - to the Board of Directors at all assembled meetings or as required by the Board.
- d. Participate in the creation of all budgets and audits.
- e. File annually all appropriate state non-profit and corporate forms and make appropriate Internal Revenue reports.
- f. Co-sign on all disbursements.
- g. And such other duties as normal to the office of the Treasurer.

Section 8. Officers of the state organization may be removed by a two-thirds vote of all members of the Board of Directors providing notice of the proposed action has been sent to all member chapters 30 days in advance of the action.

Section 9. Chapter directors to the state Board of Directors may be removed by their respective chapter and their alternate shall finish their term. Notice of removal and the name of the replacement director shall be furnished the state Board of Directors immediately following the action.

## **ARTICLE VIX National Directors**

Section 1. The BCH of (your state) is entitled to two voting directors on the National Board of Directors of the Back Country Horsemen of America; therefore, the state organization shall select two directors and an alternate to serve as representatives from (your state) on the National *Page 34*

Board. These directors and alternates shall preferably be members of the state board; however, other individuals who are members in good standing of a local chapters may also be selected as National Directors. To maintain continuity on the National Board it is recommended that National

Directors serve staggered multi-year terms. No two National Directors shall be selected from the same chapter.

Section 2. Directors and alternates to the National Board shall express a willingness and desire to attend and actively participate in the National Board meeting with some or all of the expenses to be borne by the individual.

### **ARTICLE X Committees**

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall create committees or activities to accomplish the mission of the state organization.

*Note:* Committees can be both standing (permanent) or temporary and should be created to meet the individual needs of the state organization. The following is a suggested list of standing committees - Public Lands, Publicity/Media, Education, Membership/Expansion, Service Volunteer Hours, Finance, Health and Safety. The National organization strongly suggests that every state have a standing Public Lands/Legislative Committee. This committee is key for working with the land management agencies on issues of local, state, and national importance. It is advisable to list your state committees in your by-laws along with a brief job description of each.

Section 2. Committee chairmen shall be appointed by the state chairman with approval by the Board of Directors. Vacancies of a committee chairman shall be filled by appointment by the state chairman. (Some states elect their committee chairmen to avoid favoritism.)

### **ARTICLE XI Finances**

Section 1. The treasury of the BCH of (your state) shall be borne by all member chapters in a manner established by the Board of Directors and ratified by a two-thirds vote of the member chapters.

Section 2. All expenses of chapter delegates/directors to the state Board of Directors shall be borne by the individual member. The director's home chapter may provide financial assistance at rates set by the chapter.

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Section 3. All expenses of the state Chairman for conducting the business of the BCH of (your state) may be borne by the treasury of the state organization.

Section 4. Office expenses for the officers and National Directors shall be borne by the treasury of the state organization.

Section 5. The state organization shall provide financial assistance, all or in part, to the voting delegates attending the National Board of Directors meeting. The amount of financial assistance shall be determined by the Board of Directors. Local chapters or individuals may also assist in this effort.

### **ARTICLE XII Amendments**

Section 1. These by-laws may be amended, repealed, or new sections added by a majority vote of the members of the Board of Directors at an assembled meeting and ratified by a two-thirds vote of all member chapters. All member chapters shall be notified in writing thirty days prior to the meeting at which the by-laws are to be changed.

### **ARTICLE XIII Liquidation, Dissolution, or Termination**

Section 1. In the event of liquidation, dissolution, or termination of the BCH of (your state), any assets remaining shall be transferred to the Back Country Horsemen Education Foundation of America 501 (c) (3) or to another Back Country Horsemen organization as determined by the Board of Directors of (your state).

### **ARTICLE XIV Adoption**

These by-laws ratified and adopted this day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

President Chapter\_\_\_\_\_

President Chapter\_\_\_\_\_

President Chapter\_\_\_\_\_

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