

Gila Chapter

Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 1/8/2020 6:00 PM | Meeting location WNMU Watts Hall

Meeting called by Doug Dexter

Type of meeting Monthly business meeting

Note taker Cindi deCapiteau

Attendees

Joan Bacon, Sharon Brown, Charlie Coffman, Cindi deCapiteau, Dixie Dexter, Doug Dexter, Vicki Dowd, Gerry Engel, Andrea Imler, Dave Imler, Nancy Imler, Russ Imler, Mickey Lemon, Rawlings Lemon, Joel Larsen (spelling of name might be incorrect; can't read signature), Kathy Murch, Charlen Perez, Cheryl Roth, Randy Roth, Donna Tillmann, Ilene Wignall, Melinda Wood, Randy Wood

Agenda topic Additions or changes to agenda | Presenter Doug Dexter

Doug added an update to 501c3 policies.

Agenda topic Additions or changes to minutes | Presenter Doug Dexter

No changes to the November 2019 minutes were requested. Gerry Engel moved to accept the minutes as submitted. Second by Joan Bacon. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Agenda topic Financial & membership report | Presenter Dave Imler

Financial activity since November involved expenditures of \$699.40 and income of \$1977.50 for a bank balance of \$8296.09.

The chapter has 46 paid members distributed over 18 family memberships and 10 individual memberships. Noting that the total membership numbers have dropped significantly since 2019, Doug asked Gerry to send reminder message to the reprobates who haven't paid their 2020 dues.

Action items

Person responsible

Send an email reminder to all chapter members to pay dues for 2020.

Gerry Engel

Agenda topic Publicity | Presenter Vicki Dowd

Vicki commented that she is preparing a thank you to the Forest Service for its efforts to improve trailer parking on Bear Creek Road (see image on page 10). In addition, Vicki will be distributing plenty of publicity in the next month in preparation for the April 2020 competitive trail ride at NAN Ranch.

Agenda topic Public Service/Communications | Presenter Gerry Engel

Several Gila chapter members are certified to operate chainsaws and/or crosscut saws in the Gila National Forest and wilderness areas. This authorization has two requirements. Sawyers must not only be certified in saw use, but must also receive first aid certification (saws being sharp tools with considerable hurty potential). The two prongs

happen in alternate years; 2020 is a first aid year, so all certified sawyers need to recertify soon. Gerry is working with the Forest Service on providing the training and certification. Gerry will email a request to the sawyers asking for their available dates during the first two weeks of March.

Dave Imler advised that Grant County Search and Rescue has an individual who can train and certify for first aid (in case the Forest Service doesn't come through). Gerry added that it's possible to get first aid training from Stephanie McGovern (safety authority for the Gila National Forest) who can put on a class in early March.

Gerry is also preparing the 2020 trail schedule and will distribute a draft soon. He summarized that Heart of the Gila is looking at 10 trail projects between now and the first of June.

In the matter of reimbursement for expenses (mileage and food) that chapter members incur while working on trails, the process works like this: If the chapter (actually, that's Mickey Lemon and her squadron of volunteer cooks) buys or makes food, then we deduct those expenses and use any remaining money to pay our volunteering members for mileage. Traditionally, most of the funds the Gila chapter receives for trail work have come from the federal [Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000](#). Funding is administered by the Forest Service, which receives grant money from "[Resource Advisory Committees](#)." The committee that issues money for Grant County is the [Southern New Mexico Resource Advisory Committee](#) (RAC).

For 2020, the Gila BCHNM chapter has \$1,500 for work in Grant County, but no moolah for Catron County (where we also work). Unfortunately, our RAC was dissolved a year or so ago. Although the Forest Service is working to form a new one, the process isn't progressing with any recognizable speed. The Forest Service has submitted names of people to serve, but the approval of names submitted has fallen on the apparently unhearing ears in Washington DC. So it will be a while before we get any RAC money for 2020, but funding is expected in the next couple of weeks for work we completed in 2019.

Alternatives for small amounts of money exist, however. We can use money from the chapter treasury. Grant County is a potential source of funding. In addition, Melissa Green (trail work coordinator for [Heart of the Gila](#) and a Gila chapter member) is working on a grant proposal from Wells Fargo. The local mines are a possible funding source, but their proposal due date has passed for 2020.

Action items

Person responsible

Email certified sawyers requesting dates available for first aid training in the first two weeks of March 2020.	Gerry Engel
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Release draft of the 2020 trail project schedule	Gerry Engel
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Agenda topic *GCSAR Activity* | Presenter *Russ Imler*

Russ Imler reported that the last search and rescue mission was at Sheep Corral. A hunter who wandered off without his buddy ended up 17 miles from where he thought he would be. It took two days in a helicopter to find him. His gun and pack are still up there. He was in sight of the river when he was found and he realized he had no idea where he was. The Forest Service is concerned to find his loaded gun. He left his stuff up there probably because of hypothermia dementia.

Agenda topic *BCHNM Updates* | Presenter *Mickey Lemon, Rawlings Lemon*

BCH New Mexico has a meeting coming up on February 1, but has released no information.

Agenda topic *Bookmark and Brochures* | **Presenter** *Pat/Cindi/Becky*

Following a USFS cookie branding in which we participated late last summer, Pat Buls commented that the Gila chapter can benefit from having both uniforms to identify who we are and something informative and relevant to our cause to hand out to people nothing to report. Suggestions included a revisit of denim vests with a BCHA patch on the back, bookmarks that inform about trail clearing, horse packing, leave no trace protocols, and a brochure that describes the Gila chapter. We even discussed printing and purchasing options.

The secretary confessed that she offered to work something up, but she hasn't done anything, so there's nothing to report.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Design a Gila BCHNM chapter bookmark	Cindi deCapiteau	It's on the list...
Revisit an existing BCH brochure and customize for the Gila chapter.	Cindi deCapiteau	See above

Agenda topic *Piños Altos parking improvements at trailheads* | **Presenter** *Kathy Murch*

Kathy Murch gave us some good news about a polite political pressure effort she and Pat Buls waged. On December 14, 2019, a meeting occurred with the Forest Service and the Piños Altos community. Ten-to-12 people participated and discussed the matter of developing improved rig parking access to the beautiful trails through the Bear Creek area. Initial misconceptions about the proposal generated uffishness and false assertions on Facebook were resolved.

Kathy and Pat have been nudging the Forest Service to improve the trailer parking. The Forest Service got right to work at a suitable location on Bear Creek Road (map on page 10) and has already created parking space for three rigs. The project isn't quite finished, but Beth Ihle (District Ranger for the Gila National Forest) thinks they can get it done by spring.

Kathy has spoken to somebody named Earl at NMDOT about widening Bear Creek road; she reported that they're working on that.

Gerry Engel commented that this parking is a big deal; without it, it's challenging to access the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) in the national forest west of Piños Altos. Limited options for parking without the new parking area. He also said that once you get to the CDT up there, you end up crossing Hwy 15 if you go north, so be careful there—but it's a nice ride that goes past the Arrastra site (map on page 11). The trail heading south goes to Little Walnut.

Agenda topic *BCHA Vests....where are we* | **Presenter** *Cheryl Roth*

The matter of uniforms for chapter members to wear at public events has been discussed in previous meetings and a couple of show-off members followed up.

You can do something glamorizing right now for the next time you help out on a chapter public event. The national BCH office sells patches that bear the organization's colorful logo. Amazon sells really cool denim vests. You can get everything you need from:

Patch - BCHA store - <https://bcha.site-ym.com/store/ViewProduct.aspx?ID=6694179>

Denim vest - Amazon.com - https://www.amazon.com/Wrangler-Mens-Unlined-Denim-X-Large/dp/B007XEXEQ8/ref=sr_1_4?crid=3MGUXI25WISSP&dchild=1&keywords=wrangler+denim+vest&qid=1579201917&sprefix=wrangler+denim+vest%2Caps%2C213&sr=8-4

Cheryl Roth will put the patch on your vest if sewing isn't your thing. Also, shipping might ratchet up the prices, so we suggest you combine your order with those of your best chapter riding buddies.

Agenda topic *Christmas party recap/suggestions* | **Presenter** *Open discussion*

The consensus is that the Christmas party in December at the Buckhorn Saloon in Piños Altos was a good event, although the setup could use some improvement—including another table, something that Doug will suggest in the future.

Some of us mourned the absence of a silent auction in 2019 and Doug suggests that the Buckhorn venue might not be right venue for the auction. The auction could be held during the summer picnic, but more people show up for the Christmas party than for the picnic. Looks like nobody cares when the auction happens, but nobody wants to organize the event. The members present murmured assent that the Christmas party is the most favorable time for the auction. Nothing was firmly decided, however.

Agenda topic *Electric bikes in the forest....do we have a position* | **Presenter** *Cheryl Roth*

Cheryl reported that she has asked Amy Hartell (Recreation Coordinator for USFS Region 3 – Arizona and New Mexico) to have somebody to talk to us about the ongoing proposal to allow electric bicycles in the national forests. Cheryl plans to get this done at the February 2020 meeting. Doug will ask Gila Hike and Gike to come talk to us then as well.

We're all of the opinion that we don't like the proposal, but we'll have no official policy until we get details in February.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Get a speaker from Gila Hike & Bike	Doug Dexter	February 12, 2020
Get confirmation of USFS presenter from USFS	Cheryl Roth	February 12, 2020

Agenda topic *NAN Ranch April NATRC* | **Presenter** *Vicki Dowd*

The NAN Ranch ride, sanctioned by the North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC) will occur at the [NAN Ranch](#) April 17-20, 2020. Vicki outlined planning to date for the ride.

Trails. The 2020 event will have three marked trails:

1. "Open" trail
2. "Novice" trail
3. "Leisure" trail (which uses parts of the Novice trail)

Ride Divisions. The ride will have five divisions:

- Open
- Novice
- Competitive Pleasure
- Distance Only
- Leisure

Rides. The divisions will participate in three separate rides:

1. "A" ride for **Open, Novice, Competitive Pleasure, and Distance Only** (judged)
 - a. Two days:
 - i. Saturday –
 1. 30 miles
 2. Travels on "Open" trail
 - ii. Sunday
 1. 20 miles
 2. Begins on "Open" trail
 3. Travels on "Novice" trail
2. "B" ride for **Novice and Distance Only** (judged)
 - a. Saturday
 - i. 20 miles
 - ii. Begins on "Open" trail
 - iii. Travels on "Novice" trail (about 8.5 miles from camp)
3. Leisure (unjudged)
 - a. Friday beginning at 9:30 a.m.
 - b. Ride lasts from 2 to 2-5 hours
 - c. Begins on "Open" trail
 - d. Travels on "Leisure" trail (about 4 miles from camp)
 - e. Leisure riders must arrive at NAN Ranch by 8:30 a.m. on Friday (April 17)
 - f. Leisure riders must complete their ride and be out of the way at camp by 12:30 or 1:00 p.m. on Friday so that incoming "A" and "B" riders have space to get situated.

Please look for more information on the Gila chapter website at <https://gilabchnm.com/natrc-nan-ranch-ride/>

Publicity. Publicity for the ride is underway. Flyers have been distributed at feed stores throughout Grant County, along with the Mountain Right establishment in Arenas Valley and the vet offices. Flyers still need to get to Duncan and Safford (Arizona) and Truth or Consequences.

Ride Information. The ride information packet documents (including entry forms) has been posted on the Gila chapter website at <https://gilabchnm.com/natrc-nan-ranch-ride/>. If web browsing isn't for you, but you want to join the ride, Charlen Perez (ride secretary) can send you a hard copy. If web browsing is your thing, you can save Charlen a lot of time by registering for the ride on NATRC's ride management system (RMS) at <https://rms.natrc.net/Logon.aspx> (if you don't have an RMS user name and password, you can create them when you get to the site above).

Ride Expenses. Expenses for the 2020 ride will be higher than in the past. The customary horsemanship and vet judges, who came to the ride from locations in New Mexico and Arizona, have retired. Vicki lined up a Gila chapter member, who happens to be a NATRC certified vet judge—Susan Dent—who had a change of plans and is no longer available. So the judges for the 2020 ride will be coming from farther away and will have higher transportation expenses (airfare from Missouri and Kentucky), which the ride supports. That said, Vicki found another vet judge (Lucy Hirsch), who will still have transportation expenses but agreed to waive her judging fee if Vicki will work as Lucy's tour guide for two days after the ride.

The ride will also be attended by an apprentice judge who lives in Albuquerque. The NAN Ranch Ride is his last apprentice performance; after this, he will be a fully-fledged NATRC horsemanship judge.

Personnel and Volunteers. Dale Streams (Mimbres Valley Mobile Veterinary Services) will be the ride's on-call veterinarian. Our Arenas Valley friend Glen Geesaman will serve as the ride farrier.

Ride staff volunteers have shaped up so far as follows:

- Vicki Dowd – ride manager and trail manager

- Ilene Wignall – trail manager
- Charlen Perez – ride secretary
- Judy Lawson – assistant ride secretary
- Joan Dewbre – judge’s secretary

Vicki noted that several other positions await your offer to volunteer—timers, drivers, food preparers, gatekeepers, pulse/respiration recorders, safety riders, and parking/hospitality.

Timers keep track of the times each rider:

- Leaves camp
- Arrives at and leaves a pulse and respiration (P&R) check, lunch stop, judging point, or other designated stop
- Returns to camp

Drivers:

- Pick up and deliver judge(s) to/from the El Paso airport
- Ferry judges around the trails during the ride
- Transport P&R volunteers to their positions and carry lunches (prepared by the riders themselves) to the lunch stop
- Stand by with an open stock trailer to serve as a horse ambulance
- Need to have sturdy four-wheel drive vehicles

Food preparers:

- Make breakfast burritos or casseroles for the staff (not for riders)
- Assist with sandwich fixings for the staff

Gatekeepers:

- Stand by to open and close gates as riders pass

P&R recorders (12 people needed):

- Measure and record pulse and respiration rates for each horse
- One P&R team member can be the team’s driver

Safety riders:

- Travel in pairs
- Can travel on all or part of a ride
- Follow the riders at a distance
- Can travel by horse or ATV
- Understand the safety protocols
- Notify appropriate people/agencies in the event of emergency for rider or equine
- Carry a personal cell phone and handheld radio (provided by the ride)
- Must not interfere with riders
- Horses (if used) must be calm, able to cross water, do not freak out if separated from partner’s horse

Parking/Hospitality:

- Lays out and marks parking spots for rider rigs and equines
- Directs arriving riders to appropriate parking place
- Acquires materials for hospitality bags
- Prepares and distributes hospitality bags to competitors
- Answers questions about NAN Ranch and its facilities
- Directs competitors to ranch office to pay fees

Contact Vicki by email (vcartcat@hotmail.com) or phone (760-533-1897) to sign up for one of these positions.

Competitors. Now in its third iteration, the NAN Ranch Ride is gaining traction; Vicki expects at least 40 riders at the 2020 ride. Word about the ride's quality and beauty is getting around and the leisure ride has caught people's imagination. Competitors are expected from Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico, as well as from Wisconsin and Tennessee. Vicki acknowledged Dixie Dexter, who contacted the Hidalgo County 4H (on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Hidalgo4H/>) to drum up young people's interest in competitive trail (we've been trying to bring them in for a couple of years; Dixie succeeded!). The 4H leader in Rodeo wants to recruit a bunch of kids to ride. Vicki granted a discount of \$10 from the ride entry fee for riders from 4H.

Catered Dinner. Dinner after the Saturday rides will be catered by Donnie Foreman (from Mimbres). The cost to riders, their guests, and guests of volunteers is \$12. *The meal is free for volunteers only.* Volunteers also get breakfast and lunch fixings at no charge.

The menu is baked chicken, a vegetable, and a salad. Charlen Perez will prepare dinner rolls.

Radio Communication. Cell reception is spotty outside of camp, except on high elevations. In the past, NATRC Region 3 has provided handheld radios for safety riders and others who work outside camp, but the matter hasn't been settled yet for the 2020 ride.

Ride Updates. Donna Tillmann suggested that chapter meeting agendas between now and April need to include update about the ride. The February meeting will feature what might be a lengthy discussion about the use of e-bikes on Gila region trails, so Vicki Dowd said she will make the February update brief. She noted also that to deal with issues already arisen or that do arise, she will designate subcommittees.

Question about 1st Aid Training. Relative to a previous agenda item, Ilene Wignall asked if an individual who is not a certified sawyer is eligible to attend the upcoming 1st aid training. Gerry Engel advised that participation has been open to sawyers from other BCHNM chapters, but that it would be OK for Ilene to attend (even though she isn't a certified sawyer). (Ilene noted that as a safety rider for the NAN Ranch Ride, she feels a need to brush up on first aid.)

Action items	Person responsible
Add NAN Ranch update to agendas for February and March	Doug Dexter
Keep an ear to the rails for ride-related issues and form subcommittees as needed	Vicki Dowd
Add Ilene Wignall to list of participants in 1 st aid training	Gerry Engel

Agenda topic F16 update preliminary EIS | **Presenter** Gerry Engel

As everybody knows, the US Air Force wants to increase the air territory for training flights and has distributed a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for public scrutiny. Since the three proposals include using the Gila wilderness areas for F-16 training purposes, nobody around here is very happy about it.

Gerry has drafted a letter to the Air Force EIS group and will send it on (under Doug Dexter's signature) if we all agree that it should be sent. Stephanie Stone (a Gila chapter member) and Susan Beck (local information guru about Air Force machinations) is reviewing Gerry's draft, which encourages the Air Force to approve the [EIS Alternate 1](#) (if you go to this website, scroll down to the heading "**Alternative 1: Talon MOA**".)

By show-of-hands vote, the majority of members present agreed to Gerry's admonishment to the Air Force and Gerry shipped it off on January 16. He also provided the letter to the Gila chapter membership via an email attachment. A copy of the letter is attached to these minutes on page 12.

Agenda topic *Chapter Bank Account* | **Presenter** *Dave Imler*

Dave Imler called for a motion to authorize a change of signatories for the chapter's bank account. Currently, Jean Hill and Nancy Imler are the signatories, but as they no longer hold treasury posts, the names should be changed to Dave Imler (treasurer as of 2020) and Doug Dexter (chapter president). The motion was made and seconded and carried by a unanimous show of hands.

Action items

Person responsible

Provide Dave with a copy of the relevant portion of these minutes for bank officials.

Cindi deCapiteau

Agenda topic *Fiscal Policy for 501c3* | **Presenter** *Dave Imler*

Dave reminded us that new fiscal policies to support our prized 501c3 status were sent out as an email in early November. The policies need to be officially adopted by the membership.

Dave summarized the policies for the group's edification. They are attached on page 15.

A motion to accept those policies as presented was made by Randy Roth, seconded by Dixie Dexter. The Motion carried and the policies adopted.

Q&A. Dave's presentation generated a couple of questions and comments. Gerry Engel asked if we find grants we want to apply for, do we need approval to apply? Dave responded that approval is needed only to authorize expenditures.

Randy Wood asked about the possibility that entities from which we might seek funding have political positions that are tied to the release of money and which could interfere with the chapter's tax-exempt status. Gerry replied that he hasn't seen any. Sometimes, he continued, a grant is accompanied by matching funds from third parties (that could perhaps have such political positions). Gerry commented that a match made by contributions in kind does not present a problem. He also said that sometimes a granting organization requests acknowledgment of grant contributions. Gerry noted that he hasn't run into too many with strings attached, but if he does find them, he will seek approval to apply.

Agenda topic *Donation Mechanisms* | **Presenter** *Gerry Engel*

Gerry commented that asks us to think of some way that enables people to donate money to the chapter, maybe through the website via PayPal? No mechanism. Cindi can investigate PayPal for groups get account. Doesn't have to be dealt with immediately.

Action items

Person responsible

Look into setting up a PayPal account for the chapter

Cindi deCapiteau

Figure out how to link PayPal to chapter website and Facebook page

Cindi deCapiteau

Agenda topic *Announcements*

Gila Forest Plan. The revision of the plan for the Gila region forests continues. There will be an open house discussion about the plan on Monday, January 27, 5:30 p.m. at the Grant County convention center (next to Ace Hardware at US 180 east and the 32nd St. Bypass).

Slimy water trough. Ilene Wignall mentioned that from time-to-time she has spearheaded an effort to clean the green stuff out of the water trough at Ft. Bayard's Badlands Corral. She lets the Forest Service know what she's up to and recruits helpers. The trough crew pumps the trough out and uses snow shovels to scrape out the ugly matter. Gerry Engel asked Ilene to let him know when she will do this next. Then Gerry will send a note to the

Forest Service to let them know what we're up to. Gerry also mentioned that he has a key to the gate at the Servis Corral (several hundred yards east of the Badlands Corral) so that can facilitate access for the work crew.

Action items

Person responsible

Coordinate cleanup of Badlands water trough

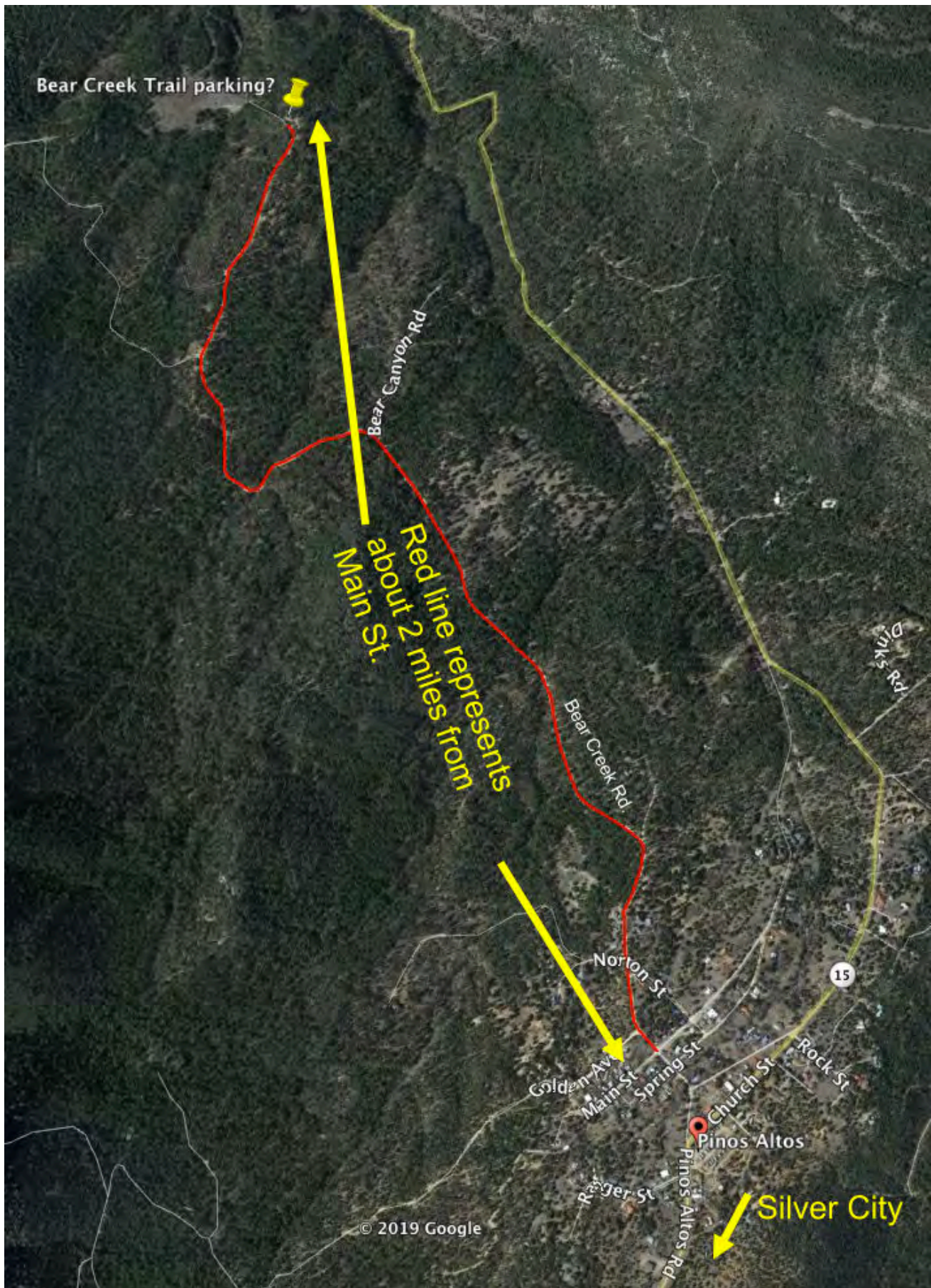
Ilene Wignall

Warn the Forest Service that action is forthcoming

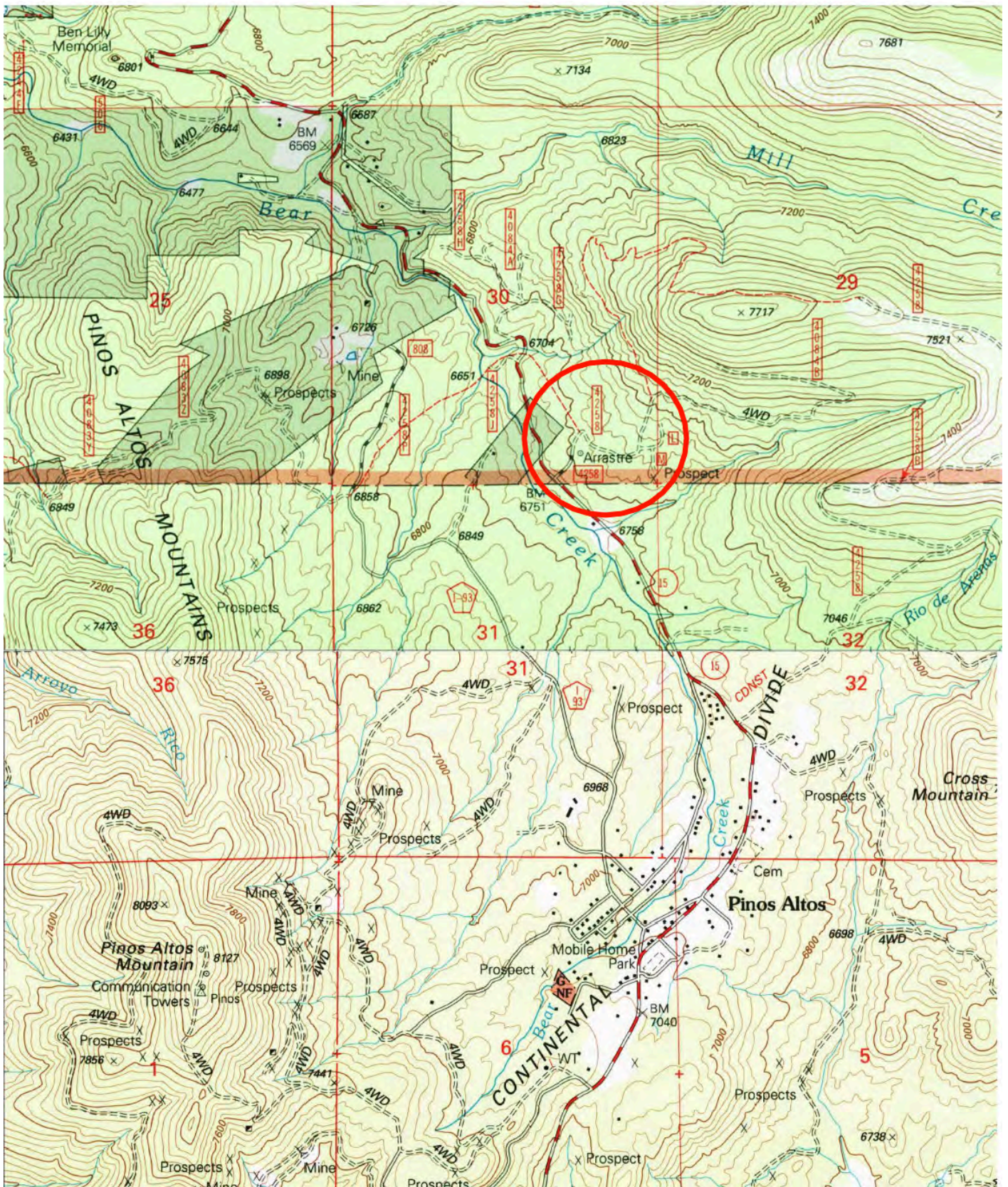
Gerry Engel

Meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Approximate location of improved parking for Bear Creek trail



Arrastre site (sources USGS 1999 Twin Sisters and Ft. Bayard maps)



Gila Chapter
Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico
P.O. Box 553
Silver City, New Mexico 88062



**Response to Air Force DEIS for Special Use Airspace Optimization, Holloman Air Force Base
January 16, 2020**

Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) is a national organization with Chapters in 31 states. The Gila chapter of BCHA (BCHA-Gila) is based in Silver City, New Mexico, and has 80 dues-paying members. The mission of BCHA is to perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness. The Gila chapter contributes by maintaining trails on the National Forest. In 2019, we partnered with other outdoor-oriented organizations to clear 112 miles of trail on the Gila National Forest.

The purpose of this letter is to express our grave concern about increased F-16 maneuvers above the Gila National Forest and associated wildernesses. In short, we strongly encourage you select Alternative 1 that expands the existing Talon MOA that Holloman currently uses over southeastern New Mexico, east of Alamogordo. Military aircraft have trained in this area for years; bases benefit the economies of Alamogordo and Otero County; the Air Force acknowledges that Alternative 1 meets its training needs with the fewest risks and impacts. We recognize the role of Holloman's F-16 pilot training mission to national defense. Alternative 1 best meets those needs.

The environmental impact statement (EIS) that purports to evaluate the effect of expanding F-16 flights into the Gila region is flawed. The following are specific examples of how the EIS does not evaluate, or does a poor job of evaluating, the effects of such flights.

SAFETY

The EIS does not evaluate the effect of flights on the safety of horse users. These include recreational riders and professional packers who are responsible for mounted clients with limited to no horse experience. Horses are prey animals that attempt to flee, often violently, from novel stimuli they fear, e.g., loud noise. The terrain in the Gila is rugged, and can be dangerous. A horse that becomes unmanageable on a narrow trail that traverses a cliff face puts its rider in considerable danger. An unmanageable animal on flat terrain is less of a danger. Therefore, the EIS should include the number of miles of public accessed trails—and calculate how difficult their terrain—to better evaluate differences in risk to horse users associated with each alternative.

Horses are also highly trainable. Horses that are accustomed to noise do not react as badly to noise as those that are not. There has been significant military use of aircraft over the Alternative 1 area; horses there are less likely to overreact and endanger their riders in comparison with horses in the Gila region that are noise naïve.

We are specifically concerned about the welfare of BCHA-Gila members when we are doing trail maintenance. We often remove downed trees on steep trails with no place to tie our horses. On these occasions, one member may hold several horses while the rest of the crew works. If the horses

stampeded in fear, that member could easily be run over and dragged. Many of our most active trail maintenance members are past retirement age, making any injury more serious. Further, the EIS is not specific about when flights would occur. Would number of flights be the same year round? While horse riding occurs in all but the coldest months, hunting seasons are the time when the most horse use occurs in the wildernesses on the Gila National Forest.

Safety to non-horse users is also a concern. EIS data show that 1-3% of flares are duds, and concludes that the risk is minimal. However, "minimal" is not "zero." An Arizona woman was burned over 50% of the front of her body, including her face, by such a dud (Wichner, Tucson.com, 2017).

FIRE

The EIS fails to present analyses that compare alternatives by probability of fire, difficulty of fire suppression, and consequences of fire. Factors like fuel type, amount of fuel, potential rate of spread, and ease of access should be considered in these analyses. If a fire were ignited by a flare, fires in areas with high fuel loading and limited road access would result in significantly more environmental damage than one in areas of low fuel loading and easy road access.

In the past eight years, more than 400,000 acres of the Gila National Forest have burned. The forest has lost more than one hundred miles of trail. Downed fire-killed trees have made it much more difficult for BCHA-Gila to keep remaining trails open. The Gila is an arid area where "normal" fire risk is high. Flares dropped from aircraft are another way to ignite a fire in this dry country. The EIS states that flares will not be used during periods of high fire danger; however, given that many areas in the Gila have high fuel loading, it is questionable whether this precaution would be effective. A photograph in the Johnson (2017) article shows a large scorch mark made on bare ground by the dud flare that would easily ignite dry underbrush in the Forest.

Costs of fighting fires and potential danger to fire-fighters should be compared among the alternative areas that differ in fuel loading and remoteness/access. The EIS does not compare the possible effects of fire should one occur. The Gila has experienced devastating fire events; more fires would compound the already significant environmental effects on a fragile ecosystem.

Analysis of these factors is critical to understand the true fire risks attendant to the different alternatives.

RECREATION

The EIS treats recreational users as a monolithic group. This is not accurate, as demonstrated above by the special concerns of mounted users. The effects of increased military flights on different types of user groups should be conducted. Noise, for example, affects different types of users in different ways. Those engaged in motorized activities are less apt to be affected by additional noise than those engaged in non-motorized activities. Many recreational users in the Gila come to the area expressly for the serenity: being quiet and alone is a rare commodity in modern America. These users do not expect to be subjected to excessive noise events when they are communing with nature, and when they are, it negatively affects their experience (Weinzimmer et al., 2014). Analyses should identify different user types and expectations across the alternatives, and project the potential economic costs of lost recreation revenue.

The EIS states that no analyses need be conducted on the visual effect of jets maneuvering overhead. The rationale is that airplanes are small compared to the area that can be seen; therefore, they are not

visually obtrusive. This assertion is not based on any evidence. In an urban area, where ambient activity is high, and aircraft are plentiful, the low flying F-16 conducting maneuvers would still be notable; in a wilderness where the earth and its community of life are “untrammelled by man” (Wilderness Act, 1964), it would be disruptive in the extreme. The visual effect of jets conducting prolonged military exercises at low altitude needs to be ascertained, and compared across alternatives.

COMPLIANCE

We are concerned about the Air Force's ability to control the altitude at which pilots fly. Air Force representatives state that planes would be monitored and pilots reprimanded if they do not fly within altitude limits prescribed in the EIS decision. However, most of us who ride on the Gila National Forest and wildernesses have experienced low flying aircraft that are below presently established limits. We ask that the Air Force assure us that all restrictions in any decision will be complied with.

Weinzimmer, David, Patter Newman, Derrick Taff, Jacob Benfield, Emma Lynch and Paul Bell, “Human Response to Simulated Motorized Noise in National Parks” *Leisure Science*, Volume 36, Issue 3, pp251-267, 14 May 2014

Wichner, David. “Device that burned Graham County woman was military flair.” *Tucson.com*, February 6, 2017, https://tucson.com/news/local/device-that-burned-graham-county-woman-was-military-flare/article_7805813b-840b-5374-a180-56869379cdd0.html

Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136, 78Stat.890) – Public Law 88-577, approved September 3, 1964

Sincerely,

/s/ Doug Dexter

Doug Dexter,
Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen President

GILA CHAPTER
BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF NEW MEXICO
GENERAL POLICIES

CHAPTER FUNDS¹

- 1) Gila Chapter funds shall be distributed by check and require a receipt for items and services received.
- 2) A statement of how Grant funds are to be distributed for reimbursement of project expenditures, i.e. mileage, food, per diem, etc, shall be considered a receipt.
- 3) Financial records, including but not limited to, ledgers, bank statements, reconciliation documents, copies of letters of acceptance of donations, and any other documents relative to financial activities shall be maintained for a minimum of seven (7) years, except receipts of expenditures shall be maintained for a minimum of three (3) years.
- 4) Expenditures of Gila Chapter funds exceeding \$200.00 shall require an affirmative vote of the majority of members present at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Gila Chapter. Exceptions are payment of dues to BCHNM, distribution of Grant funds or distribution of funds provided by other sources for specific projects.
- 5) A board member may request from the Treasurer, Gila Chapter funds not to exceed \$200.00. This request shall only be for items or services needed for chapter business that can not be delayed until a scheduled meeting of the chapter.
- 6) When Gila Chapter members are required to travel for chapter business, the member shall be reimbursed for food, lodging and fuel for their personal vehicle. Paid receipts shall be required for reimbursement of all travel expenses. Approval of travel shall be required except for the State Delegates.
- 7) The President shall appoint a committee of at least two members to audit the financial records maintained by the Treasurer. This audit shall be conducted in December of each year.

EMPLOYMENT

- 1) The Gila Chapter shall not employ any individual on a full or part time basis.
- 2) Any individual working for the Gila Chapter shall be under contract for the duties and time frame designated by the contract. Open ended contracts shall be prohibited.

EQUIPMENT

- 1) An inventory of Gila Chapter equipment shall be maintained and verified in December of each year.
- 2) Individual members requesting usage of Gila Chapter equipment shall have completed any training requirements for the equipment usage.

PUBLIC/MEDIA RELATIONS

- 1) The Gila Chapter President, or a chapter member designated by the President, shall be permitted to provide information relative to chapter activities to the public and/or media.
- 2) Individual members shall not represent their personal opinions to the media or other groups as being the policy or position of the Gila Chapter.

COMMERCIAL SALES or PROMOTIONS

- 1) Commercial sales or promotions at Gila Chapter meetings or events are prohibited.

¹ These policies were adopted by Gila Chapter members at the regular monthly business meeting on January 8, 2020