

Gila Chapter

Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico MINUTES

Meeting date | time 2/10/2021 6:00 PM | Meeting location Zoom

Meeting called by Doug Dexter

Type of meeting Monthly business meeting

Note taker Cindi deCapiteau

Attendees

Joan Bacon, Pat Buls, Cindi deCapiteau, Dixie Dexter, Doug Dexter, Gerry Engel, Melissa Green, Dave Imler, Nancy Imler, Russ Imler, Mickey Lemon, Rawlings Lemon, Kathy Murch, Cheryl Roth, George Siavalis, Nat Williams, Laurie Wlosinski

AGENDA TOPICS

Agenda topic *Call to order* | Presenter *Doug Dexter*

Call to order at 6:00

Agenda topic *Approval of January minutes* | Presenter *Doug Dexter*

Joan Bacon moved to accept the January 2021 minutes as submitted. The motion received a second and carried on a unanimous show of hands.

Agenda topic *Financial & membership report* | Presenter *Dave Imler*

Dave reported that the chapter's checking account balance is 14,965. The only financial activity since last month was a deposit of somebody's dues.

Doug said he has received a dues check from Stephanie Stone. Doug will deposit it in the bank. Dave admonished that he needs her membership form and Doug will prod her for that.

Action items

Person responsible

Deposit Stephanie Stone dues check

Doug Dexter

Get completed membership form from Stephanie Stone

Doug Dexter

Agenda topic *Public Service/Communications* | Presenter *Gerry Engel*

Gerry is still working on matters related to the National Forest Foundation grant application and on the chapter's interactions with the Forest Service, given USFS expectations for trail work in the coming season. Gerry noted that he spoke with the Forest Supervisor (Adam Mendonca) about a proposal Gerry put together that describes the kinds of things we can help the Forest Service with. Mr. Mendonca did not immediately return the call.

The application for grant funds from the National Forest Foundation has been submitted, in cooperation with the Gila Watershed Alliance. Gerry noted that the expectation is to start working with these funds in April or before.

Agenda topic *GCSAR Activity* | Presenter *Laurie Wlosinski/Russ Imler*

Nothing to report. Very Quiet

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

Mickey reported that she hasn't heard anything from anybody about anything.

Agenda topic *Crosscut Log Update* | **Presenter** *Cindi deCapiteau*

Cindi glanced up from her furious typed recording of these minutes to report that a new issue of *The Crosscut Log* is not in progress. Melissa offered to send info about projects to include in the next issue when it gets going.

Action items

Person responsible

Send trail project info to Cindi

Melissa Green

Agenda topic *Membership signup status* | **Presenter** *Dave Imler*

Currently, the chapter registers 55 members, thirty-seven of whom have signed up from last year. There are still six stragglers from last year who have not signed up.

Dave has been informed by BCHNM that he needs to submit a form to make sure everybody gets newsletter.

BCHNM reported 103 members in 2020; of those, 45 are from the Gila chapter.

Gerry will send out an email to get re-ups on board.

Action items

Person responsible

Nag dawdling last-year members to re-up

Gerry Engel

Agenda topic *Highway Cleanup* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

The periodic roadside trash clean-up originally scheduled for January something or other was cancelled because, you know, weather in January. So Doug announced a new date—next Wednesday (February 17) or the following Wednesday (February 24). As always, the plan is that chapter rag pickers meet at 9:00 at the Wind Canyon firehouse.

Action items

Person responsible

Announce date of highway cleanup

Doug Dexter

Agenda topic *Sawyer Training* | **Presenter** *Gerry Engel*

The Gila chapter has been authorized to conduct our own sawyer training (chainsaw and crosscut). The goal is to certify our people to work with saws on trail projects in the Gila. Seventeen people, including participants from Heart of the Gila and New Mexico Wild, have signed up for the next training.

Gerry talked to Ty Oliver (the FS chainsaw coordinator) and received authorization to conduct training so long as we do the right thing by COVID.

Here's the process:

- The trainers will mail all the classroom materials (including links to online videos) out to students.
- Students will study the manual and view the videos.

- We will do one or two Zoom sessions to get questions answered.
- Skills testing will have to be in person, in one or more sessions attended by an appropriate number of people.
- We don't have to do first aid training this year because the every-two-years first aid certification requirement has been dropped for now (but will probably come back).
- Some of the students will take only the classroom instruction; others will do both classroom instruction and skills practice.

Gerry is hoping to be done with the training by the middle of March. Some HOTG people and New Mexico Wild have signed up.

Mickey noted that Dave Turner is interested in training. Gerry said Dave has been put on the list.

Gerry wondered if he could use Russ Imler's Grant County Search and Rescue (GCSAR) Zoom account to conduct the sawyer training online sessions. Russ (or somebody like him) said you betcha—Gerry can do Zoom training via Russ's account as long as Gerry's production doesn't conflict with something GCSAR needs to do.

Agenda topic *Trail clearing & maintenance schedule* | **Presenter** *Melissa Green*

The 2021 Trail Clearing Schedule is out and has been distributed to all members via email.

Mickey Lemon (food overseer for hungry trail workers) reported that she is in good shape for the March 26 Mogollon projects. Fifteen people have volunteered to help with food.

Melissa added that people interested in working a project should sign up earlier rather than later. Although last-minute sign-ups are welcome, planning and delivery work best with advance notice.

Doug asked about including other organizations on the projects. Mickey has sent the schedule to all state chapters and letting them know that although we need packers, we can use any kind of help—and to contact Melissa directly if they're interested.

Melissa has sent emails to her whole list of volunteers, as well as to her bicycle shop list. She also prepared a blog for Continental Divide Trail Coalition and provided a blurb thereon for GBCH.

Doug mused that he could go to the cycling community and give them a reminder.

Action items

Person responsible

Remind bike community about 2021 trail projects

Doug Dexter

Agenda topic *501c3 operations and legal issues* | **Presenter** *Dave Imler*

Assuming that the Gila Chapter expects to be paid by the Forest Service for whatever they will pay us for these days, the chapter needs to take on some regulatory bling. In one case, this comes in the form of a DUNS number, which all businesses that contract with government agencies are required to have. So, the chapter has registered with Dun & Bradstreet, purveyor of the DUNS number.

In another case, the chapter needs to have a SAM registration. "SAM" is the System for Award Management, a federal concern that registers enterprises seeking to do business with the federal government. An active registration in SAM is required to do business with the federal government, so the chapter has applied accordingly.

At the last meeting, we requested money to hire an attorney and a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and that's been done. The chapter board met with the attorney, Gwendolyn Lacy, at which she reported on some background work she did for us. She charges \$180/hour and bills monthly.

Although Mike Morones is on board with the chapter as our CPA, we don't know what the charges will be for accounting services. Dave provided Mike with information about the chapter's accounting procedures. On another matter, Mike advised that it's unlikely GBCH will need to report on federal forms when contributions to the chapter reach \$50K; the threshold for that kind of reporting is \$250K.

Finally, the chapter is working on an agreement with Melissa Green (refer to the Board of Directors minutes included with the GBCH membership meeting minutes, February 2021). The contract is not yet final, so Dave asked for a motion to pay \$294 Melissa for developing the 2021 trail schedule. Dave noted that if something else comes up, he will be back to ask for more money. Nat Williams moved that the Gila chapter pay Melissa Green \$294 for that work. After receiving a second, the motion carried by a show of hands.

Agenda topic *Website changes and progress* | **Presenter** *Melissa Green*

Perhaps readers of these minutes know about, and have actually visited the GBCH website, which has been around for a long time. Perhaps some of you also know that the aforesaid website is being updated with a new look and new capabilities (e.g., online donations).

Melissa will send link to website this evening. She wants to hear your feedback about the new site, and she welcomes suggestions.

Melissa posed a few questions about the website now under development. Specifically, she asked:

- Are there any benefits of GBCH membership not already listed?
- Are there any other resources that the site can offer?
- Do you have a favorite equine website that our new site can link to?
- Are there any GBCH projects worthy of mention, to which Gerry said . . .
 - One thing we have concentrated on is the Forest Plan Revision
- Do you have any photos of people on horses? Melissa needs more photos

To move forward with the new site, Melissa promised to send out a link to everybody and wait for feedback. Then she will clean up the details, tweak the search engine, and take the site live.

Action items

Person responsible

Send link for new GBCH website to membership

Melissa Green

Insurance

Russ Imler launched a foray into the black hole of insurance by asking about it, motivated by the likelihood that the chapter will associate with volunteers who hail from outside our membership borders. Gerry said he has received paperwork to obtain a rate quote for General Liability insurance. He added that the chapter will likely also need Directors and Officers (DO) liability insurance, which BCHNM used to provide but which will expire shortly; however, BCHNM is interested in working with us getting a new DO policy going.

Russ noted that his main concern is Third Party Liability insurance. He's comfortable that he's covered by insurance provisions of the volunteer agreement, but what about people from other organizations who work with us?

Gerry responded that we need to make sure we get our Board of Directors covered and get the General Liability stuff going, but we're also waiting on feedback from the Forest Service regarding Gerry's recent proposal to the Forest Supervisor (see page 6). Moreover, the Forest Service is working up a new volunteer agreement. We can enroll non-GBCH volunteers under that agreement and they will be covered.

Volunteer Sign-up Procedure

Some brave soul whose identity the secretary failed to note asked about the process for signing up volunteers. A respondent (whose name is also lost to recorded history, but probably Gerry) said that everybody needs to sign up, but only once a year (rather than for every project).

We are working under the old volunteer agreement, which is still in effect (according to Beth Ihle, Silver City District Ranger) even though the new one is in process.

Dave asked if we need a sign-up sheet for each project, to which Melissa said she plans to sign up people on specific projects in order to collect pertinent information about health issues and special requirements. For that reason, sign-up will be done project-by-project.

Quiet Skies over the Gila

As soon as he heard the announcements that Holloman Air Force Base will not be using the Gila region's wilderness areas for F16 pilot training, Doug Dexter called Susan Beck to thank her for her work. Informed by a career in the Air Force Susan dedicated a lot of energy over several years to inform the public about the controversial Air Force proposal

Doug noted that Susan is now the president of WILL (Western Institute for Lifelong Learning), an organization populated by lots of hikers. Doug will push the trail work issue with WILL to get ground pounders for one-day projects.

Agenda topic Announcements |

This evening's meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Next Meeting: March 10, 2021

GBCH interest in making GAOA program as efficient as possible
Prepared by Gerry Engel
Submitted to Adam Mendonca, Gila Forest Supervisor
January 2021

A major concern of the Gila Chapter of Back Country Horsemen is that the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) fund be used as effectively as possible to accomplish as much trail maintenance as possible. We are hopeful that the program will be funded for the full 5 years but realize that even 5 years is not a lot of time considering the magnitude of the job to be done.

We feel this is a once in our lifetime opportunity to restore to useful condition many of the trails on the Forest that have been negatively affected by past fires, floods and lack of trail funding. As such, we are willing to do anything we can to help accomplish that goal. We realize that you are understaffed and that the result could be that it will be difficult to coordinate and oversee many of the activities that need to take place on the Forest. We want to help in any way we can.

We appreciate the fact that you have established a year-round trail crew. Since most trail crew members are from other areas and are not familiar with the Forest, however, we feel it will take some time before that crew reaches peak efficiency. We also appreciate the fact that you are planning to bring in youth crews from other areas to accomplish work but again because those crews are from other areas, they may not be as effective as they could be. They are also expensive.

At the same time, you are dealing with a lot of folks that have not had much experience on the Forest, we have been able to attract a person (Melissa Green) to our membership that has a wealth of experience on the Forest and we feel has the expertise and enthusiasm to help meet the goal of accomplishing as much as possible with the GAOA money available. In addition, we have other members that have been volunteering on the Forest for many years and are willing to help as much as they can. There is also untapped volunteer potential, people interested in doing volunteer trail work that come from throughout NM, Arizona and Texas. But there is no forest service staff to coordinate them.

In the past, we have been 100% volunteer organizations. Assuming you want our help, we feel we may need to change that. To be able to provide the maximum assistance in making the Gila National Forest GAOA program as efficient as possible, we feel we need to contract/employ Melissa to help us help you efficiently implement the program. Obviously, whatever help you want from us is your decision. However, we feel that if we could obtain year-round or near year-round funding for Melissa through the GAOA funding, we could help in the following ways:

- We could lead more volunteer trail projects and engage other groups interested in volunteering

GBCH interest in making GAOA program as efficient as possible

- The more GAOA \$ that can be leveraged with volunteers the more trail work that can be accomplished at minimal costs. All non-volunteer options seem to be very expensive.
- In the end, the Forest would have more local trained volunteers that can continue to volunteer for future project and long-term maintenance. In addition to the GAOA program, this will help meet the intent of the Sustainable Recreation Program and will provide cooperative opportunities to continue to increase the efficiency of the Forest trail crew. It will also result in increased local appreciation and support of the Gila National Forest. In comparison, other crews, such as conservation crews, leave after their work is done. We are not proposing that all non-forest service trail crew work be done with volunteers. However, the more that volunteers can do, the more efficient the work will be. We need a dedicated person who can put time and energy into getting this more widely established
- Being local, we and Melissa could work with the FS trail crew. Together we could get more work done through coordinating efforts. We may be able to help with packing or doing parts of a project that could make it more efficient for the trail crew to complete the work. We could also do that with youth conservation crews but need someone on our end to help with coordination.
- Melissa could scout or layout trail for the FS trail crew or other crews, if there is a lack of experience on the crew and the GS 7 does not have time. So, basically the FS would have a backup, if you get in a bind on critical projects.
- We, with Melissa's experience, could set up and manage an Adopt-a-Trail Program and train interested volunteers. We have already researched what other adopt a trail programs do and have started creating an adopt a trail program manual made specifically for circumstances in the GNF. We know the priority, at least for the next couple of years, is to implement the GAOA, but we feel an adopt a trail program should be part of that priority. In the recent telephone conference call, Adam said he feels that deferred maintenance applies to any legal trail so all the work done by trail adopters could be recorded as work done to reduce deferred maintenance and thus be recorded under the GAOA accomplishment reporting. Thus, GAOA funding should be able to be used to fund this program. Establishment of this program would help assure that trails would not fall back into the category of deferred maintenance after GAOA funds are no longer available
- We, with Melissa could start training interested and qualified volunteers on how to be assistant crew lead or leaders for volunteer projects. In the past we have been pretty much limited to having one group at a time out since we had limited leadership.

GBCH interest in making GAOA program as efficient as possible

- Melissa could compile data from volunteer projects and assist in providing volunteer hours etc. to the Forest Service so that all hours are reported. She could also help keep Forest Service information specialists and front desk folks up to date on work that has been accomplished on the Forest so better information would be available to the public.
- In the past, it has been difficult for the Forest Service to evaluate work done by youth conservation crews. We and Melissa could assist with monitoring and follow-up to ensure quality work.
- We, with Melissa's lead, would research and apply for other funding to help with the program and to prepare for GAOA funds to run out.
- Melissa (in her spare time can also clear trails on her own (using appropriate safety precautions)
 - This could be done during the times of the year when the weather is less ideal to be working with volunteers or less ideal for youth corps
 - She could easily adjust and change trail work plans due to unforeseen circumstances
 - Melissa will be able to work more efficiently than a conservation corps and knows the standards and the trails. This equals to more trail work accomplished – more efficient use of time
 - Melissa, working alone or with other BCH members would be able to quickly clear trails that were recently worked. Once significant deferred maintenance is addressed, this would make it quicker to reopen trails each year. It is inefficient to send in Youth Corps or larger volunteer crew when clearing can be done with just one or 2 people. Youth Corps and Volunteer projects are better for the significant deferred maintenance.

Problems this solves:

- In our past experience, it seems that Youth Corps are expensive, are often not well trained and sometimes don't get much work done. They also do not know the area or the trails well so to be effective need more time to scout projects and get organized before the crew can effectively work. Melissa and some other BCH members might be able to assist. Melissa knows the area, the trails, and the standards.
- Youth Corps have high overhead. Maximizing the use of volunteers would reduce costs. Working with folks that do not know the Forest and that do not have a track record on the Forest requires more Forest Service over site. Since Melissa worked for the Forest Service for a long time and since BCH has been volunteering for the Forest

GBCH interest in making GAOA program as efficient as possible

Service for 17 years, we could work without significant FS supervision and could help with over-site of other volunteers and groups.

- Youth Corps are not local – Melissa and BCH members live locally, are dedicated to this area and can create other local support through volunteer projects and adopt a trail training that will have a positive long last effect on trails
- Despite being highly qualified, Melissa does not have merit status anymore and cannot apply to the FS jobs. This position would keep her in trails where she has lots of knowledge and experience. In the long term GBCH feels this would have a large positive effect on the trail program on the Forest.
- With the potential of high turnover on the FS trail crew, Melissa could work with the crew when there are vacant crew positions on critical projects while new crew members are being hired. This would improve the efficiency of the Forest Trail Crew during periods of crew member shortages.
- Probably the highest used wilderness trails are those surrounding the Gila Cliff Dwellings. Melissa is located in Gila Hot Springs and can easily focus on the trail near her, thus improving visitor sanctification for those recreating in that area. She would have access to BCH volunteers to accomplish this.
- Our feeling is that, in the past, bring in Youth Corps has often been inefficient and ineffective. This is even more true when the work is in a back country setting. We realize that with the size of the GAOA program, it will be necessary to have Youth Corp assistance, but we would like to see the Forest Service evolve more into something like we are proposing. We feel something like this has high likelihood of benefit to the Gila National Forest more long term
- As a forest wide trail crew, there will be are many pressures to work on all districts. We really want to see the trail crew succeed. If through Melissa's, GBCH's and the Forest's efforts we can get a strong volunteer program going, it could help provide need flexibility to help ensure all districts get appropriate use of the trail crew and feel equally served.

After GAOA funds dry up in 5 or less years

- Some of the programs (such as adopt a trail) will need less funds since the initial set up is the most intensive. More volunteers will be properly trained which means less training time needed
- Trails will be in better condition - continued maintenance should be much easier than if trails were in need of major maintenance.

GBCH interest in making GAOA program as efficient as possible

- The NM Outdoor Recreation Department will be more established and likely have more funding available for which we can compete.
- The volunteer and partnership program on the Forest should be more established and have a track record, so GBCH should be better able to successfully apply for grants through National Forest Foundation, McCune Charitable Foundation, Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, REI, other grant options and through local donations.
- If there is less funding, a volunteer program can be flexible while still retaining skills and interests. There can be less big volunteer projects while keeping the adopt a trail program running. This allows for consistency where consistency is needed while adjusting other parts of the program that are flexible.

GBCH interest in making GAOA program as efficient as possible