

Gila Chapter

Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 2/8/2023 6:00 PM | Meeting location Watts Hall

Meeting called by Matt Rehani

Type of meeting Monthly business meeting

Note taker Cindi deCapiteau

Attendees

Joan Bacon, Cindi deCapiteau, Phil Dendel, Dixie Dexter, Doug Dexter, Gerry Engel, Kyle Grambley (USFS), Melissa Green, Carol Jean Huffrey, Andrea Imler, Dave Imler, Nancy Imler, Russ Imler, Rawlings Lemon, Carlos Martinez del Rio, Martha Martinez del Rio, Michelle McGorky, Maribeth Pecotte (USFS), Charlen Perez, Matt Rehani, Cheryl Roth, Elizabeth Toney (USFS)

Recognize guests and new members | Presenter Matt Rehani

GBCH was honored to welcome newcomers, as well as guests from the Forest Service, to the meeting:

- Kyle Grambley, Recreation Program Manager, US Forest Service
- Phil Dendel, new member
- Carol Jean Huffrey, new member
- Carlos and Martha Martinez del Rio, new members
- Maribeth Pecotte, public information contact, US Forest Service
- Elizabeth Toney, Silver City District Ranger, US Forest Service

Financial & membership report | Presenter Dave Imler

Dave reported the income and expenses GBCH has incurred since last meeting as well as the membership numbers current as of this meeting:

Expenses paid:

- Quarterly dues, \$1250
- Workers compensation, \$992

Income received:

- Donations
 - \$1500.00
 - \$66061.10¹
- Other: \$1250 received for membership dues and contributions for the meal everybody enjoyed at the January meeting (a New Year celebration in lieu of the December holidays).

Membership: Forty-three current dues-paying members. Included in the total are these new members:

- U Carol Auffrey and Mike Ritter

¹ This donation is targeted as matching funds on trail grants for which Melissa Green is now applying.

- U Michele McGorky (welcome back!)
- U Gary and Maria Latson
- U Richelle Price
- U Phil Dendel
- U Kathy Murch (welcome back!)

Note that the GBCH membership form is available on the chapter website

(https://www.gilabch.org/files/ugd/867f2f_2ecf3113443642d09b64614ccbc54e8d.pdf).

GCSAR Update | Presenter Russ Imler

Russ's update consisted of one word, "Quiet."

Guest Speaker | Presenter Mary Beth Toney USFS

Elizabeth Toney reported that much has been going on in the Gila USFS over last the 11 months, including events such as the Black Fire, staffing changes, and decentralizing trail crew management among the various forest districts. She also noted her hope to be working with us (and as the Silver City district ranger, she will certainly have opportunities to do so).

Grant money for trail work from the [Great American Outdoors Act](#) is expected to arrive soon. The Act is a product of the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture and administered through the National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Education, and the USFS. The local USFS office is also working on a challenge cost-share agreement that can help open up other doors for trail work.

Black Fire. Ms. Toney mentioned that last summer's [Black Fire](#) was a challenge for the Gila region—and nearly the whole Aldo Leopold Wilderness was lost to the conflagration.

Trail assessments are expected to begin soon, with help from some folks in Montana. The strategy is to determine and prioritize the work to be done.

The Gila Wilderness Centennial is coming up soon. Watch for GBCH opportunities to celebrate. The Forest Service is mulling over trail work to be performed in connection with the event.

Positions filled USFS has hired Brian Stolts as assistant recreation program manager. Brian has a wealth of knowledge and is good at building relationships. In addition, the Silver City district will be hiring trail staff and is working with Conservation Corps NM out of Las Cruces to hire crews of 6-8 people for hitches of 10 days. A wilderness trails lead position has been hired for Ft. Bayard and Gomez Peak. The position will be supported by two permanent folks.

Campground fees The dreaded campground fee matter, which has been the focus of local USFS attention for many months, is alive and well. USFS is now working on proposals for fees at selected to increase to \$10. Fees will increase for group reservation areas. Fees for some of these will go from \$10 to \$15 and the Catwalk will increase from \$3 to \$5. Although some fees will increase, the Juniper and Mesa campgrounds (day use areas) will remain free. Fee increases will occur for group reservation areas. Some are increasing from \$10 to \$15. Fees at the Catwalk will rise from \$3 to \$5.

The USFS notes that a couple of years will be needed to phase in campground fees. Much work at the campgrounds needs to occur before the fees can legitimately be claimed from campers. New campgrounds need to be designed. USFS is now working on the Sapiillo campground (map on page 6) to install picnic tables, new signage, and gravel on the roads. and phased in. After all, if you're gonna charge rent, you need to provide amenities.

Recreation Resource Advisory Council. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) organized a Recreation Resource Advisory Committee in December. BLM is planning to complete a call for membership and to publicize the committee's development.

Horse camp interlopers. USFS knows about and shares our irritation when non-horse campers set up in areas designated for livestock use. As a result, the Forest Service has outlawed camping outlawed within a ¼ mile of a horse area. Trailheads are designated for day use, but trail workers and their rigs sometimes camp at trailheads and ride out to their projects the next day, thereby themselves morphing into interlopers. Once campground fees are phased in campers will move into the horse areas, for which (presumably) no fees are in effect.

[Topic] *Google Groups* | **Presenter** *Melissa Green*

The chapter's current method for email communications from/to GBCH members runs through Gerry Engel, who forwards missives to an email list he maintains. Melissa Green has investigated "Google Groups," an email service that provides discussion groups for people who share common interests. Every GBCH member is automatically signed up for this group, but anybody who doesn't want to participate can unsubscribe.

Use the service from your email program, using gila-bch@googlegroups.com as the target address. Rules apply: Use the group for GBCH matters only. Sales and photographs unrelated to GBCH work are not permitted.

The group will eventually replace the email-via-Gerry method we now use.

[Topic] *BCHNM Meeting* | **Presenter** *Cheryl Roth*

Joan Bacon and Cheryl Roth are GBCH's representatives to the state organization, BCHNM (<http://www.bchnm.org/>). The representatives from all BCHNM chapters meet about four times a year. The most recent meeting occurred on January 21 via Zoom.

Discussion led by Dan Key, BCHNM president, focused on raising membership rates (details will emerge eventually). Dan wants each chapter to install a membership coordinator, who would be in charge of recruitment.

The meeting of the national organization, [Back Country Horsemen of America](#), will happen in April in Kalispell MT meeting in Kalispel in April.

The GBCH reps sent GBCH coasters and placemats to Dan.

BCHNM is still working with the Forest Service on the matter of e-bikes on trails. One strategy is to install at trailheads and elsewhere larger signs that outline rules for e-bikes.

Public Communications | **Presenter** *Melissa Green*

Several GBCH members heard a local radio announcement that advertised GBCH trail projects specifically. Nobody knows who is behind the item. If you know, let Melissa know. She would like to express her thanks.

Fun Rides | **Presenter** *Cheryl Roth*

GBCH has held four fun rides (no chainsaws required) recently. Two rides were down at the Dragonfly Trailhead (Ft. Bayard), with a ride out at Saddle Rock (see map on page 7) and another ride from the trailhead at Jack's Peak heading south to Gold Gulch along the Continental Divide Trail at the base of the mountains. (Map on page 8). The rides are organized by Cheryl Roth and Donna Tillmann and are announced on the GBCH website, Facebook page, and the chapter's Google Group.

If there's a trail your heart that longs to ride for fun, contact Cheryl or Donna.

Education Segments | Presenter Cheryl Roth

Cheryl has produced education segments at GBCH business meetings for several years. The programs are always full of useful information. Cheryl has sent a list of topics and speakers to Matt. If you have a topic about which you want to learn more, or know of an inspiring speaker, advise Cheryl accordingly and she will work on it.

The segment at our March meeting will feature Katherin and Zachary Carter, proprietors of AAA Trailer Parts and Service (11747 US 180, Arenas Valley NM) to give their sound advice about how to prevent damage to trailers.

Trail Days | Presenter Matt Rehani

[Continental Divide Trail Days](#) is an annual multi-day festival to celebrate both Earth Day and the Continental Divide Trail. The festival occurs in the spring in Silver City. GBCH has staffed a booth at CDT Days for several



years. We distribute information about our chapter, greet visitors, and assist with “cookie branding.” Cookie branding is an activity where we have on hand a stack of pine logs and a sturdy sawhorse. Under the supervision of GBCH’s skilled sawyers, visitors saw slabs (cookies) from the logs and then use branding irons to burn the GBCH, CDT, or USFS logo onto the cookies. Anybody who brands a cookie gets to keep it as a souvenir. GBCH members help with setup, branding irons, photography, answering questions, and staffing one end of a crosscut saw.

We need volunteers to set up the booth (on Friday, 7:00 a.m.) and to staff it each day from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. If enough people sign up, we can work in shifts.

Contact Doug Dexter to volunteer for a shift.

Trail Days, April 21 – April 23, 2023, [Gough Park](#)

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline

Sign up for Trail Days

Everybody!

ASAP

Give Grandly | Presenter Matt Rehani

“[Give Grandly](#),” is another annual fundraiser in which GBCH takes part. The event is sponsored by the [Grant County Community Foundation](#) to support local nonprofit organizations. The public 2023 event occurs on Saturday, May 6, 2023 at the Main Street Plaza. GBCH will host a booth.

Give Grandly raised \$3600 for GBCH in 2022. We hope to achieve at least that much in 2023. As at Trail Days (see above) “cookie branding” is a popular feature

We need volunteers to set up the booth (7:00 a.m.) and to staff it from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. If enough people sign up, we can work in shifts. Eight GBCH people helped out at the 2022 event.

Contact Doug Dexter to volunteer for a shift.

Give Grandly, March 6, 2023, [Main Street Plaza](#)

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline

Sign up for Give Grandly booth duty

Everybody!

ASAP

Trail Projects | Presenter Melissa Green

After cleaning up most of the **Rain Creek Trail #189** (map on page 9) over the last year, Melissa and her crew of redoubtable hikers recently brushed another section of the trail. Melissa stated that (sadly) the trail is not suitable

for livestock travel and has a reputation as a difficult and hard-to-follow pathway, although that reputation should be diluted now as a result of GBCH work.

Upcoming projects: *A project listed on the spring 2023 schedule for White Rocks Trail #27 & Green Fly Trail #26 was cancelled due to unsuitable weather and will be rescheduled.*

In March, GBCH will revisit February's cancelled White Rocks project (March 8-12). Work is scheduled for The Wood Haul Wagon Road and Bear Creek Trail north of Ft. Bayard. May 1-5 will be a project for the Willow Creek to Turkey Feather Pass (map on page 10). Livestock is welcome on all projects (except Rain Creek) where travel is safe for livestock. If weather dictates cancellations of projects, Melissa will advise of changes.

Since GBCH feeds trail workers well and fully, the people who cook and prepare food can always use more vacuum sealed food. These meals are prepared at home and frozen. For a project, the frozen meals are packed in and subsequently heated at mealtime. Please contact Mickey Lemon or Melissa to participate in meal planning and prep.

Action items

Person responsible

Volunteer to help with trail food.

Cooks

Other USFS Stuff |

Shots at Ft. Bayard. Michelle McGorky reported that when she was out there recently, somebody within earshot of the Servis Corral trailhead was firing guns. The rule is "NO SHOOTING"² on Ft. Bayard. (Although the shots could have come from the nearby shooting range, Michelle said they were too loud to have come from that distance to where she heard them.)

Gerry commented that "hot spot hunting"³ occurs on Ft. Bayard. Moreover, elk hunting is open to youth and other-abled beings. Ms. Pecotte noted that some unauthorized hunters use four-wheelers, which USFS keeps out by placing signage and large boulders at access points and that fence-cutting is also a problem out there. USFS is trying to discourage nefarious activities, but the area is not well-patrolled by law enforcement.

Parking Lot Perturbations. A big sign at the Dragonfly trailhead clearly states that the first lot beyond the entrance is designated for trailers and other larger rigs. Nevertheless, people who don't see or read signs continue to park their itty bitty cars with bicycle racks on the bumpers and hiking poles on the roofs keep parking in the rig lot, sometimes right in front of the trail gate or out in the middle of the lot, helterskelter, causing eyerolling and grumbling for rig operators. USFS hopes to do something about that with signage and enlarging the car area to permit more vehicles.

Jack's Peak. The commodious camping and parking areas that lead to the Continental Divide Trail below Jack's Peak (map on page 8) should be graveled and better signage needs to be set up. USFS hopes to have that project completed shortly.

CD Trailhead on Redrock Road. This trailhead (map on page 11) is characterized by deep gullies, steep inclines, and deranged drainage. It also tends to fill up with deep sand after a big rain. USFS is evaluating possibilities for improvement.

² Other rules apply, as on any public lands trail: Shooting must occur a minimum of 150 yards distant from any road or trail. Don't shoot over or across a road or trail.

³ Either an illegal hunting activity known to occur in specific places or some kind of game authorized (or not) by Ft. Bayard authorities.

CD Wagon Wheel Trailhead. Also on the USFS blotter for improvement is the trailhead at Wagon Wheel (map on page 11) so users of that location might see work out there.

Mulberry. Forest thinning and other fire-prevention work has been going on out in the Burros for a couple of years. Next in line for treatment is 200 acres associated with the [Mulberry](#) collaborative forest restoration project (map on page 12).

Gomez Peak Trail. Thinning is also being organized for the Gomez Peak Trail (map on page 13).

Note: Thinning projects minimize cutting down trees.

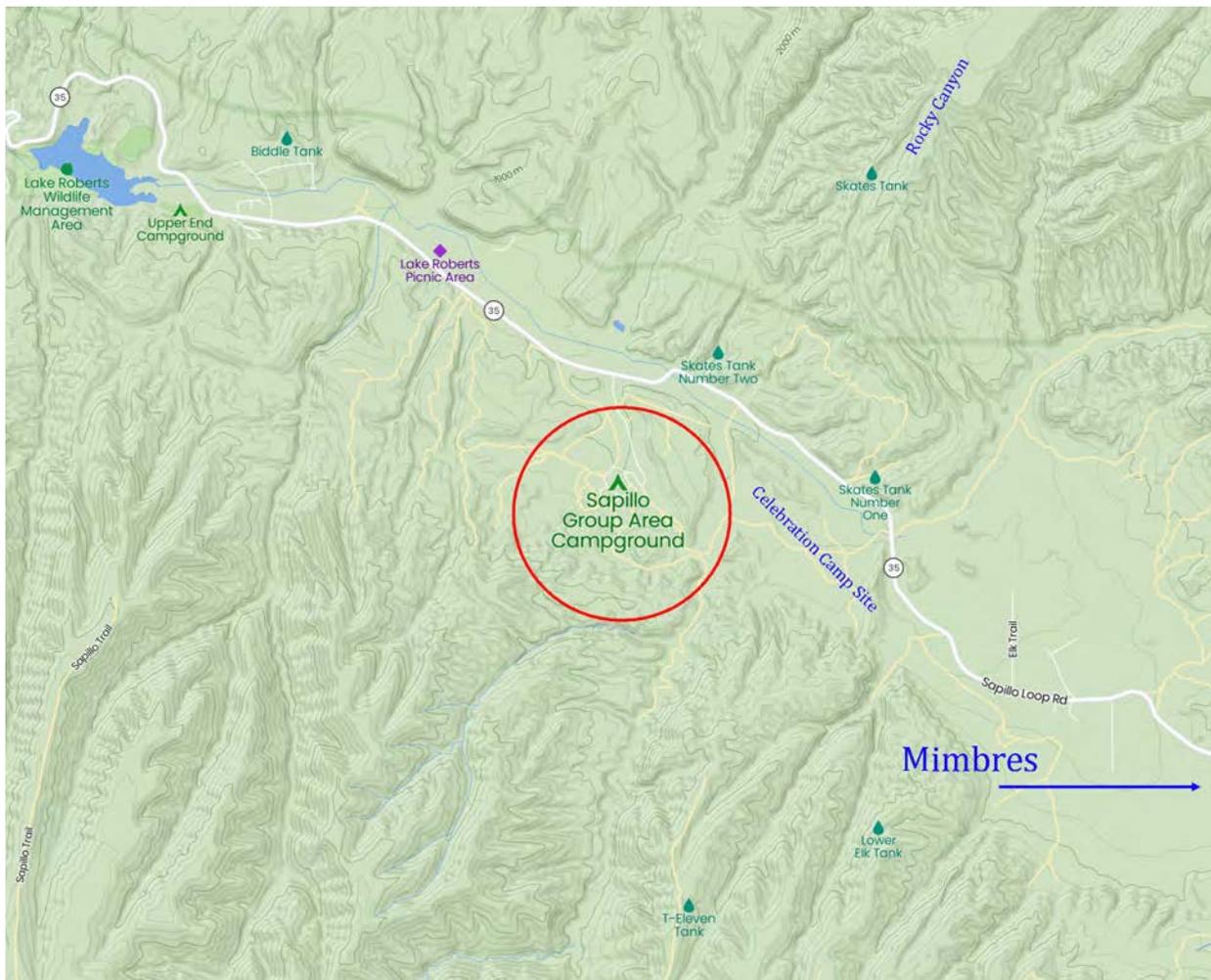
Action items

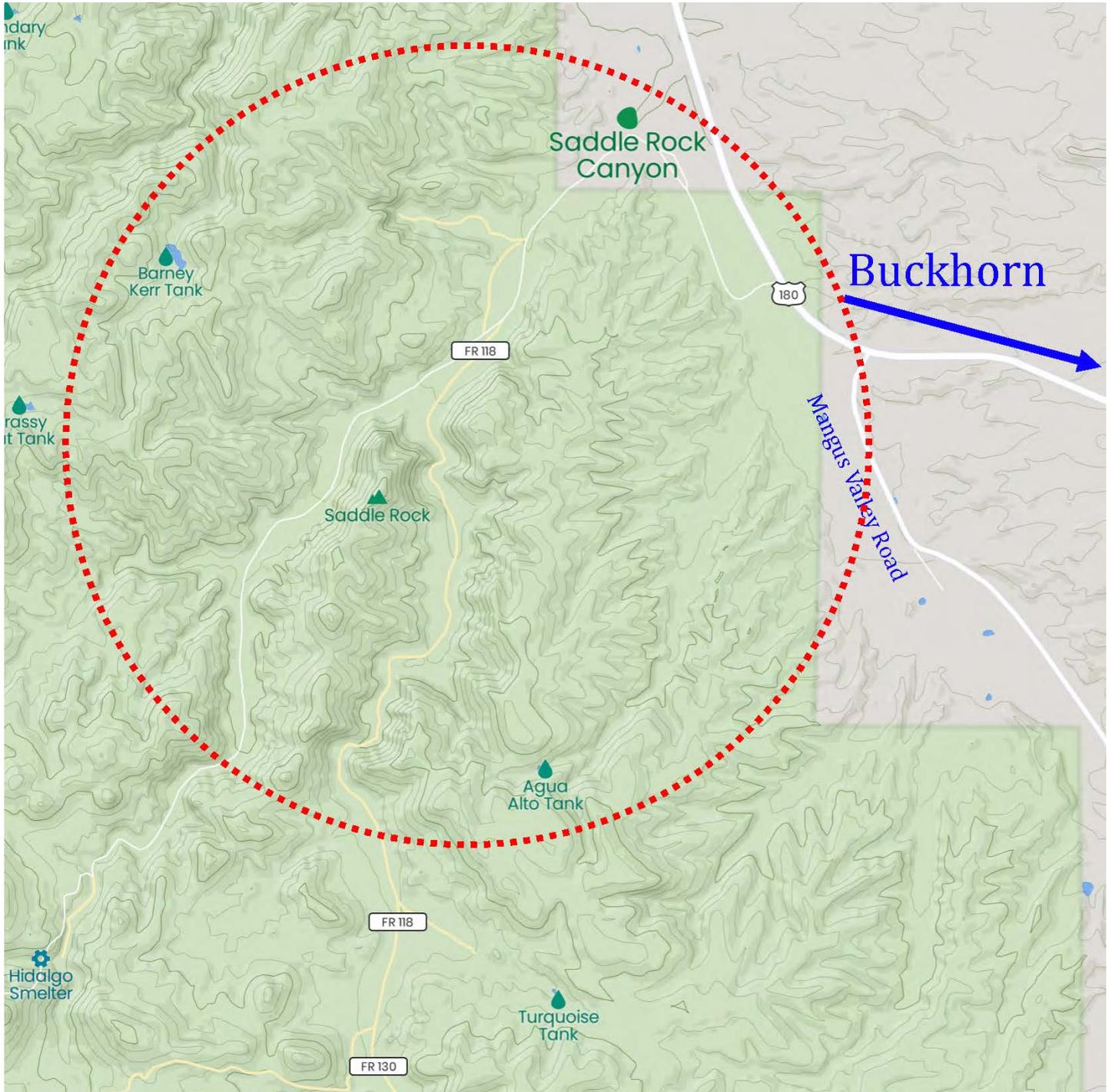
Person responsible

Give the USFS your design ideas for enlarging car parking at Ft. Bayard Anybody with ideas

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Sapillo Campground (source: mapcarta.com)





Jack's Peak CDT trailhead (source: mapcarta.com)

