

# Gila Chapter

## Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico | MINUTES

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Meeting date | time 2/12/2020 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, Cindi deCapiteau, Doug Dexter, Vicki Dowd, Chad Grossenborg (Gila Hike & Bike), Dave Imler, Russ Imler, Mickey Lemon, Rawlings Lemon, Christa Osborn (USFS), Martin Pearson (Gila Hike & Bike), Charlen Perez, Cheryl Roth, Laurie Wlosinski

### AGENDA TOPICS

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

Discussion Meeting was called to order promptly at 6:00 p.m. in keeping with Doug's orderly approach to things.

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Agenda topic *Recognize guests and new members* | Presenter *Doug Dexter*

Joining the fun this evening were representatives from the local outdoor exercise enthusiasts paradise, Gila Hike & Bike, and our good friend Christa Osborn from the US Forest Service. We'll hear from them more in a bit.

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Agenda topic *Additions or changes to agenda* | Presenter *Doug Dexter*

Apparently nobody wanted the meeting to go on any longer than necessary, so there were no additions or changes to tonight's agenda.

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Agenda topic *Approval of November Minutes* | Presenter *Cindi deCapiteau*

Either nobody read the minutes from our meeting in the distant past of November 2019, or the secretary (who was barking at her weirdly operating computer) failed to record the comments—but no changes or additions to the November minutes were ordered. The minutes were approved on voice vote.

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Agenda topic *Guest Speakers* | *Christa Osborne-USFS, Martin Pearson and Chad Grossenborg-Gila Hike & Bike*

Our guests were present this evening to give us the skinny on e-bikes—electric bicycles. They are a concern to forest and wilderness visitors due to talk about allowing these machines on non-motorized recreational trails.

Christa Osborn explained that the Forest Service defines trails as non-motorized or motorized, a distinction that governs the conveyances that can be used on a given trail. In the Gila region, non-motorized trails are limited to hikers, equestrians, and (on trails outside the wilderness boundaries) regular old bicycles (but regular old bicycles aren't allowed on trails in the wilderness). Motorized trails are open to equestrians, hikers, and mechanically-propelled vehicles (bicycles, jeeps, ATVs, motorcycles, mopeds, and e-bikes), as represented for the Gila region by the USFS Travel Management Maps (a.k.a. Motor Vehicle Use Maps--MVUM). Gila MVUMs that show trails allowing motorized vehicles are downloadable from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/gila/maps-pubs/?cid=fseprd585917&width=full>. Christa noted that e-bikes are an emerging trend, so the Forest Service wants

to work with forest users, but e-bikes are considered to be a motorized form of transportation and are therefore prohibited from non-motorized trails, in both the forest and wilderness areas.

Chad Grossenborg commented about work with the Medicine Bow National Forest (in Colorado). He said that some trails in national forests have been planned for non-motorized bicycles, but the planning process is thorough, with evaluations for the effects on biology. The plans also receive the benefit of comments from the public. The question, however, is: are e-bikes permitted on non-motorized trails? The answer is “no,” because e-bikes are considered a motorized form of transportation.

It’s a rare thing, Chad continued, for e-bikes to run on forest trails. The national forests in Idaho and Wyoming haven’t begun planning for them and are not even considering it.

Christa added that the Gila region’s USFS isn’t seeing any issues or concerns about e-bikes. Nevertheless, e-bikes—as motorized vehicles—must be covered under the travel management rule. In the future, if e-bikes ramp up in popularity, the Gila can add special designations to the motorized vehicle maps. She also noted that the Department of Interior (which administers the national parks) has opened up their areas and is more accepting of e-bikes. Moreover, under USDA guidelines, 40% of trails are open to e-bikes. Although changes might be coming, for now they are considered motorized vehicles.

Martin Pearson explained facets about e-bikes that have caused confusion for many people. There are, he said, three classes (recognized in 22 states) of electric bicycles:

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Pedal assist only	Pedal assist + throttle	Pedal assist + throttle
Speed up to 20 mph	Speed up to 20 mph	Speed up to 28 mph
Acceleration: like normal bikes		Acceleration: “Rad”

The Bureau of Land Management has approved use of Class 1 e-bikes, but Martin didn’t mention the kinds of trails on which they are approved. He noted that the trend is to allow them to have access, presumably to non-motorized trails. Their use will need to be monitored by authorities to make sure e-bike users operate according to applicable regulations. A question arose from Cheryl Roth—who does the policing?—acknowledged by Vicki Dowd’s comment that “Sometimes people will ride where they aren’t supposed to. We need a way to identify somebody who is on a trail where they’re not supposed to be.” Martin responded that in Medicine Bow, the Forest Service is still learning. He noted that if he were out on the trail and encountered that situation, he would ask questions, such as “Do you know you’re not supposed to be riding here?” He encouraged listeners to err on the side of innocent intention on the part of a violator, adding that consumer education is needed and the industry and the Forest Service will be working to educate and apply appropriate signage.

Christa commented that the Forest Service wants people to be safe, so the agency monitors usage. If it’s an evolving trend, the Forest Service will try to figure out the best ways to deal with it. With e-bikes being motorized vehicles, she said, whether to allow or disallow them on forest trails still has to go through travel management policy. If that’s the need, USFS wants partners to help develop policy.

Gila Hike and Bike, Martin noted, isn’t interested in Class 2 or 3 e-bikes because they are essentially mopeds and are recognized as such in New Mexico. Use of e-bikes on highways in New Mexico is illegal because there’s no such thing as an e-bike license in New Mexico.

Electric bikes are equipped with a diagnostic system that shows the total mileage a given bike has been ridden and of the total, the number of miles ridden in the bike’s various modes. As a result, it’s possible to tell the number of “unassisted” miles an e-bike has been ridden. It turns out that the five or six e-bike users in Silver city travel almost half of their total miles unassisted.

Responding to the questions, “Will the trend of increasing use continue here?” and “Will designated areas for e-bikes be needed?” Martin responded “Yes.” As people age, but want to stay active, they want the help an e-bike can provide. Younger people also benefit because the travel range increases making it easier to get to remote areas. Electric bikes are an alternative for more serious riders; we have some unkept trails in the Gila region that are hard to ride on regular bikes and e-bikes make the riding easier.

Another question, “How much noise do they make?” received Martin’s observation that the sound from the motor is low. They don’t go much faster than a regular bike and they look just like a regular bicycle.

Laurie Wlosinski asked how far can a rider travel on an e-bike? Martin answered that, using turbo mode and if you “try to wreck the bike,” you can go 20 miles on a single battery charge. If a rider uses pedal assistance, the distance is farther. Electric bikes, he added, weigh around 45 lbs. and are harder to pedal.

**Update on forest plan revision.** Christa wrapped up the discussion by introducing a new topic. The draft of the Gila’s forest plan revision has been published and it’s time to make comments on it. You can get more information from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gila/home/?cid=STELPRD3828671>. Download a copy of the draft document from [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/fseprd687231.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd687231.pdf). If you have other questions, call Christa at 575-388-8421.

**Statewide forest fee proposal.** USFS agencies in New Mexico are developing proposals on fees for the use of some forest campgrounds that are currently available free of charge. The public engagement process is beginning now and Christa urged us to comment. New Mexico has 193 camping sites. The proposal is to institute or increase fees for 43 of these. The Forest Service wants to know the kinds of services that users want to have available at fee sites (e.g., potable water, water troughs, trash cans and the service to empty and maintain them, picnic tables, improved access for trailers, etc.). If you comment, please be specific about your needs and the campground where you want to see them. You can comment by snail mail, email, or telephone. See details at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gila/home/?cid=FSEPRD684790>, or contact Christa at 575-388-8421 for more information. View the Forest service press release on this topic at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gila/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD695220>.

Note that the comment period ends on December 31, 2020.

**Bear Creek parking for CDT access near Piños Altos.** The need for better parking facilities for the Bear Creek portion of the Continental Divide Trail has been discussed at Gila chapter meetings over the last several months. The Forest Service, impetus from Gila chapter members (Pat Buls and Kathy Murch) has completed preliminary work for this purpose (see map on page 6), but interference from USFS regulations has delayed completion. Rest assured that the Forest Service is still working on it.

**The Poster!** Two years ago, the Forest Service produced a poster that acknowledges the Gila Chapter’s work on trails. If you were out there during the 2017-2018 trail-clearing season, there’s probably a picture of you on it. Christa says it’s time to update the poster, so if you have photos of trails and work crews for more recent projects, email them to Cindi or Gerry. We’ll pass them on to Christa.

### Action items

### Person responsible

Dig up trail work photos and send them to Christa

Cindi deCapiteau, Gerry Engel, anybody else who has them

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

As of February 12, the Gila chapter had income of 3,206.72, outflow of 2,830.61, leaving a bank balance of \$8,672.20. We have 20 family memberships and 14 individual memberships for a total of 54 trail-clearing souls.

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Agenda topic *Publicity* | Presenter *Vicki Dowd*

An article about the Gila BCH chapter has been submitted to *The Independent* and is scheduled for publication in March 2020. Information about the upcoming NAN Ranch Ride will be released after the ride in April; the information released so far about the ride is to attract competitors. Outreach to the public is contraindicated right now because the ride is not a spectator event.

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Agenda topic *Public Service/Communications*

Gerry wasn't present this evening, but somebody (Doug?) noted that the draft trail project schedule for 2020 has been distributed through email. It is also posted (along with details as they develop) on the chapter's website at <https://gilabchnm.com/trail-projects/>

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Agenda topic *GCSAR Activity* | Presenter *Russ Imler*

Nobody has called for search and rescue lately. Nothing exciting or even remotely interesting has been going on.

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

The New Mexico BCHA chapter held elections for officers, Mickey Lemon reports. Derrick Tucker continues as state chairman and Michelle Odom (Three Rivers chapter) takes over as the new secretary (no doubt leaving Mickey, as secretary emeritus, forlorn and dejected). Dick Rahal (Pecos chapter) is New Mexico's delegate (attends the national convention) and John (Sean?) McKenna (Santa Fe chapter) is the alternate delegate.

BCHNM needs somebody to step up to keep an eye on public lands developments. Feel free to step up. Anybody? All you have to do is monitor what local, state, and federal legislatures are doing to threaten or preserve public lands instead of selling them off to private interests. This is easy to do by paying attention to websites that deliver conservation, nature, and legislative information, especially in the western states. Here are several examples:

- [Public Lands Foundation](#)
- [U.S. Department of the Interior](#)
- [Protect Our Public Lands](#)
- [High Country News](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation](#)
- [The Trust for Public Land](#)
- [Center for Western Priorities](#)

Then, based on developments you discover from these and the hundreds of other sources on the web, you prepare reports for the BCHNM luminaries and to be posted on the [BCHNM public lands webpage](#). If you're eager to take on this important role and you're fond of making a difference, let Mickey or Rawlings know.

The BCHNM treasurer is ready to receive all 2019 third quarter dues now. Everybody at the state meeting agrees that all chapters should be paying in the third quarter but our spunky Gila chapter is the only one that does.

The 2020 Rendezvous will be held at Ft. Stanton October 22-25. The event will be a state affair, officiated by Derrick Tucker. Organizing responsibilities will be shared by chapters across New Mexico. Lower Rio Grande will obtain permits. Santa Fe will plan rides. Three Rivers will put on the auction. The Gila chapter will plan the potluck meal.

Derrick has worked up a new membership form that is to be used by all chapters.

The Tahoe National Forest has been sued by California groups (including BCH California) for allowing e-bikes on forest trails. One comment is that e-bikes are no worse than mountain bikes on multiuse trails. As noted above, technically (in New Mexico at last) e-bikes are not to be used on multiuse trails and not in the wilderness.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Contact Mickey or Rawlings to volunteer as BCHNM public lands chairperson	Everybody	Right now

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**Agenda topic** *2020 NAN Ranch Ride* | **Presenter** *Vicki Dowd*

The 2020 NATRC competitive trail ride is on the books for April 17-19 at the NAN Ranch in Faywood.

Donations to support the ride have been coming in. First New Mexico Bank has provided. Arenas Valley Animal \$500 from 1<sup>st</sup> nm bank. Arenas Valley Animal Clinic has given \$250. Vicki has prepared a blank donation request letter that anybody who likes to beat the bushes for funds can use to request them. Contact her for more information. An underlying strategy for the NAN Ranch Ride is to raise enough money to promote the Gila chapters activities.

Award ribbons have been ordered.

Trail marking is in progress.

A timing ride will occur during the last week in February.

The 2020 ride is using most of the same trails from the 2018 ride, with a few modifications. Pulse & Respiration (P&R) stops have been relocated and are easier to access.

**P&R Volunteers.** Apropos of P&R stops, Vicki needs seven more people to record arrival and departure times as well as to measure and record readings from horses as riders come and go. In an effort to take some of the ride management load off Vicki, Doug Dexter volunteered to assume the role of P&R coordinator.

**P&R Training.** The weekend before the ride (April 11 and/or April 12), Vicki will put on training for P&R at the Dragonfly trailhead (Ft. Bayard).

**Timing Ride Volunteers.** Vicki says she needs three people to complete the timing ride. All you have to do is ride one or more sections of a given trail and keep track of how long it takes. Since the ride is not a race, you can travel on your favorite equine at a pace and distance that's comfortable for you.

**Grub Delivery.** One more volunteer is needed to deliver lunches and keep track of in/out times for riders at the lunch stop. Try to raise enough money to promote horse activity.

**Cell Phones.** Everybody who goes out to the ranch as a worker needs to have a fully charged cell phone.

**Safety Planning.** Vicki has notified the Lower Mimbres Fire Department with details about the ride. She also has all the safety riders she needs.

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Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Contact Vicki to volunteer as a ride worker	All members	ASAP

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**Agenda topic** *Suggestions for future education segments* | **Presenter** *Cheryl Roth*

Looks like trailer safety for equines will be the next education segment, which will occur after the NAN Ranch Ride and after the Gila chapter's annual picnic.

Meeting adjourned shortly after 7:00 p.m.

Parking for access to Continental Divide Trail near Bear Creek/Piños Altos

