

SHAWNEE BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN FROM ILLINOIS

Submitted by Jackie Maxson

SBCH formed nearly three years ago and we have accomplished many of our goals using the BCH philosophy of "We are a service organization working in the back country and educating the users of back country."



Trail work at Lusk Creek.

On April 27th and 28th SBCH was invited to work with the Forest Service on Stewardship week at Dixon Springs.

Talks were given on "Leave No Trace" and Forest Stewardship. Larry Meana demonstrated the use of tools and techniques used in trail building and maintenance. Stewardship Week presentations were well received by more than 3,277 students and 157 teachers from 37 schools in 14 Southern Illinois counties.



One of the highlights of the week was the introduction and petting of Kate the mule.

In keeping with the third point of the Mission Statement of BCHA, The Shawnee Back Country Horsemen held a

"Leave No Trace" demonstration at the Saline County Fairgrounds for 4-H equine members, their parents and leaders. The demonstration instructed horseback trail riders on how to leave the trails and nature just as they found it.

Topics covered included the proper way to tie a horse without damaging trees, correct fire-building techniques, grazing and ladder hobble, and knot tying. Participants were also taught how many years it takes for different types of trash on the trail to disintegrate. The demonstration was fun and educational for both instructors and participants and it ended with a regulated "Leave No Trace" mound fire and hot dog roast.

Recently the U.S. Forest Service and Shawnee Back Country Horsemen completed a project on the River to River trail. The work was on a deeply eroded, rough and rocky trail located inside the wilderness boundary. Tim Pohlman engineered a stair system, which would accommodate and withstand the impacts from the various user groups.

On the project day, Back Country Horsemen brought their mules, horses and pack equipment. Dwight Pray had a nice mule that he used to skid logs to begin the first phase of the steps system. While Forest Service and Back Country Horsemen prepared the trail to receive these logs, some of the volunteers and Forest Service employees began digging drainage to keep the water off the trail. As soon as the steps were placed onto the trail, we began packing gravel forming the stair treads. Tons of larger rock were placed along the sides of the trail to stabilize the outside banks. This was a large project which took several days to complete.

We were pleased to see that a section of trail that was wet and nearly 50 feet wide before repairs were done last year is now a hard surfaced single track trail. This is a good example of what can be accomplished by volunteers working with our local land managers. These workdays are an opportunity for all recreational users to be involved in making a difference on our

public lands

When the project was completed BCH and their mules and horses had packed 20 tons of gravel onto the wilderness area trails. On non-wilderness area trails, 20 tons of gravel were hauled in a wagon developed by Don Cloud, a Shawnee Back Country Horsemen member. Don built our gravel wagon patterning it after a gravel wagon his grandfather had used to haul gravel onto county roads in Indiana in payment of his taxes.



Don Cloud and the wagon he built.

August, 2004

The Shawnee Back Country Horsemen, the Forest Service and the 9 Day association which consists of 19 Saddle Clubs of Southern Illinois hauled 92 tons of gravel in the one horse gap area of the Shawnee National Forest. In two days 30 loads of gravel were hauled with the gravel wagon while the pack mules packed 10 tons. Again using the pack mules on October 30th, 18,480 pounds of gravel were packed to the One Horse Gap area.



Larry Bloomer with his packstring.



Dwight Pray with his pack train.

In recognition of the 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act and National Public Lands Day the Jonesboro/Murphysboro District of the Shawnee National Forest hosted a volunteer workday on September 23, 2004. Thirty-two members of Americorp from St. Louis, Shawnee Back Country Horsemen members, ten mules and one horse accomplished water bar maintenance, trail clearing, tread maintenance and loading and unloading gravel on the River to River Trail in the Bald Knob/Clear Springs Wilderness areas.

This day offered the District an opportunity to accomplish some important trail work. An important aspect of the day was that it brought together several individuals with very different backgrounds to work towards the common goal of trail maintenance in a wilderness.

In addition to packing gravel and labor on the trails, our workdays include fun, food, trail riding and fellowship.

The Shawnee National Forest hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Day on Saturday, October 16, 2004 for many groups of volunteers. Shawnee Back Country was proud to be one of those groups recognized.



Ray and Jackie Maxon in the parade with their pack string.



Vicky Hennager riding her mule in the parade.

The 83rd annual mule Day Parade at Enfield, Illinois gave SBCH a chance to display a pack string of mules.

To learn more about Back Country Horsemen come and join us at our Equine Affair for the Music, Raffles, Food, silent auctions, packing demonstration, History of Shawnee, vendors, cowboy poetry.

**Saturday February 5, 2005
Veterans Memorial Park
8010 S. 27th St.
Mt Vernon, IL
9AM to 6 PM**

For more information contact Jackie 618-275-4412

VENDORS: contact Vicky 618-264-6037
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