



BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL

Spring 2011

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

**Are You Tough Enough
for Backcountry?**



BHA Gains More Traction in 2011

I write this as the snow begins to melt from the Oregon hillsides. Yet I am getting ready for a second autumn in the past 12 months! In a few days, I will be heading to the other side of the globe to hunt in New Zealand. Preparing for a major trip requires a lot of attention – especially when so much is going on at Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. Here are some highlights:

We now have an official state chapter in Idaho, making it our eighth state chapter. The Idaho chapter already made some positive action at the Idaho fighting bills in the Idaho Legislature that are bad for fish, wildlife and sportsmen. In addition, we are initiating the process of forming state chapters in Oregon and Minnesota, which should bring us to 10 by the end of the year. State chapters are critical for our “boots on the ground” style of activism. No one knows the ground like the hunters and anglers who cover the backcountry, from the Boundary Waters of Minnesota to the Hells Canyon Country of Idaho and Oregon.

I recently went to Washington DC to attend a Forest Planning conference. This meeting focused on a plan that will affect America's 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. There is significant need for sportsmen to chime in to maintain wild places, healthy habitat, and robust populations of common species, like deer and elk, so we can continue enjoying a harvestable bounty. Plus we should keep a special eye on habitat that supports less abundant, but still important big game species such as bighorn sheep and mountain goat.

Our staff and list of contractors is growing as we pull in new grants and get involved in new projects. Holly Enderby is continuing her work in the Clearwater Basin of north-central Idaho, plus we are generally expanding our efforts as an effective sportsmen's voice all over the west under her leadership as BHA's Conservation Director.

Have you seen our new, overhauled

website: www.backcountryhunters.org? Please check it out. It's designed to be more useful for our members and others interested in protecting America's backcountry traditions. Rose Caslar has been tenacious in helping our webmaster, Jeff Baird, get our new website up and running.

Rose also worked with Dave Lyon in Alaska to produce an Alaska-specific BHA brochure to help the Alaska Chapter with sportsmen's outreach. Dave Lyon is making great progress with the sportsmen's campaign to protect salmon runs in Alaska's Chuitna River from a poorly conceived strip mine. Alex Roche, of Tennessee, and Derrick Reeves, of Idaho, are taking on contracts to help Greg Munther in Montana to get a rein on illegal OHV activities in the Treasure State and beyond.

BHA volunteers staffed a host of sportsmen's shows around the West this spring. Two of the biggest were the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's Elk Camp and the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo in Salt Lake City. Rose has kept the flow of supplies going to all of our sport-show involvements, and we simply would not be where we are today if it weren't for a large contingent of volunteers who have both bolstered our membership and carried the word on about the mission and accomplishments of our organization. Good work all!

As an organization, we are definitely gaining a stronger voice for sportsmen, and a part of that capability is our financial stability. Right now we have \$200,000 in the bank that keeps our projects, staff, and contractors fueled. We really appreciate the generous support of all our donors and ask that you continue to promote the good work on behalf of habitat and our outdoor traditions through future financial gifts.

The Board of Directors met in person in Boise, Idaho, late this winter. It was a rare opportunity to bring our people together, rather than operate by tele-

phones and emails. The gang helped set the direction of the organization. One ambitious project we set our sights on is a national rendezvous of backcountry hunters and anglers. We've tentatively set the date for the first weekend in March in Missoula, Montana. If you would like to help organize that event, please email me at jakenson@backcountryhunters.org.

We brought on three new board members as well: Joe Mirasole, of Washington, Chad Sivertsen, of Montana, and Jay Banta, of Utah. All three have been very involved in their respective state chapters, and it's great to have their talents guiding the organization nationally. Chad will also be serving as our new national treasurer.

Well, I need to get my bags packed for New Zealand. Fellow BHA member Greg Munther and I will pursue red, sika, and fallow deer with bow and arrow. We will be joining a Kiwi friend and cinematographer Philip Commins and hopefully become part of his video production on bowhunting for free-ranging game in the New Zealand Backcountry.

Enjoy the spring! Get outside often, and send in articles and photos about your adventures!

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BHA & WOLVES

By Jim Akenson, Director

Wolf! Is there any hunter who can say that word and not feel their pulse race a bit?

Wolves are THE hot-button issue in big game hunting circles these days, so it's no surprise that our members and prospective members should ask what our position is on wolves, and predators in general. One thing I've learned is, no matter where we stand on this emotional topic, no one will be entirely satisfied.

I want our membership to understand that, as an organization, we were founded upon and choose to focus on habitat. We have periodically gotten involved in wildlife management, but our mission is focused on protecting back-country. That makes sense, because good habitat is the foundation for all our hunting and fishing.

With that said, we are a group of well-educated and highly informed sportsmen who all have opinions on this subject. We respect those opinions and try to take them all into account. I will try to articulate our official position on predators:

BHA believes that predators — including wolves — have a place on the landscape, but should be managed in numbers to keep in balance with economic, ecological, and social needs. A common concern of sportsmen is that we need to manage wolves in order to maintain "huntable" populations of commonly harvested species such as deer, elk, and moose. To address this concern in the northern Rockies, we believe that the management of wolves should rest in the hands of each state's management agency and that wolf populations should be regulated to allow for sportsmen to participate in a harvestable, sustainable surplus of wolves just like other big game species. In short, we successfully manage mountain lions and black bears as big game animals which results in a dual purpose of providing recreational opportunity and reducing livestock depredation.



Wolves are an unsettling sight for many sportsmen in the backcountry.

HOLLY AKENSON

tions and game animal predations. There is no reason why we cannot have similar success with wolves given the management tools of today and the authority to use them.

BHA recognizes that wolves can have — and in some places are having — significant negative impacts on big game numbers. We think predator control actions, if necessary, should be site-specific, based on "the best available science" and make good sense economically. As emotional as these issues get, BHA strives to be balanced, rational and base our positions on the best available science. There are many other hunters' organizations putting resources into the wolf issue right now. BHA is better off focusing our limited time and effort on habitat protection.

BHA's philosophy goes back to Aldo Leopold's land ethic. Leopold understood that predator and prey are part and parcel of the same ecosystem, the right and left hand of the land. The bottom line is what is good for the land. As a

final perspective, stated by a BHA board member recently: "I bugled in a wolf during last year's archery elk season. It was one of the coolest experiences of my life. But it would have been even cooler with a wolf tag in my pocket."

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Backcountry Hunters Start in the Frontcountry

Mentoring opens new joy in the outdoors

By Jim Watson

Aveteran backcountry hunter lays claim to a complex skill set that is possessed by only a few and is hard learned over many years. Books are helpful. Campfire stories even more so. But the only real way to become a backcountry hunter is to participate; you have to hunt and learn. To do that, you need a mentor.

We all had them: our parents, grandparents, uncles, neighbors. For me it was my godfather. When he got too old to see, he gave me his prized muzzleloader. When I take it afield, he is there by my side on the hunt. He and several other men took the time to make a difference in my life, to invest in me as an individual. They taught me to read sign, to stalk, to follow a blood trail, to be patient, how to field dress, how to pack a mule, how to cook over a campfire, and all the countless things we need to master to be really good hunters.



Part of the joy of mentoring is being able to remember what makes being in the outdoors so much fun.

Now, I am trying to return the favor by bringing young hunters into the fold. I find it is one of the most rewarding – and fun – things about the outdoors.

I am a Montana Hunter Education instructor, one of 14,000 volunteers across the state who teach the next generation to go afield safely. When someone graduates from Hunter Ed it does not mean that they are suddenly a hunter. Rather, it means they can begin training to become a hunter.

And they will need a teacher, a mentor. That is where we come in. It is our job to teach post-graduate studies and there is a lot to learn. But don't think of it as work; it will be the most fun and most rewarding experience you have ever had. You will have the honor of forever being a part of someone's life.

Before you run out and start inviting kids to go hunting, you need to find a place to hunt. And remember, the No. 1 rule when hunting is to hunt where the game is. My wife and I have worked hard to provide good wild game habitat on our ranch, especially for whitetails. Whitetails are easy to please and we have lots of them.

We call it "T-Ball deer hunting." When teaching kids to play baseball we use a smaller field and allow them more strikes. Beginning hunters need the same kind of help. You do not have to own a ranch though. Ranch gates often swing open when you explain you are mentoring a youngster. I have yet to be refused access when I explain that I am mentoring beginners.

So far, all of the beginners I have taken hunting have been family friends and associates. I look for private properties with traditionally limited public access because deer there will be less spooky. If they have too many deer I offer to harvest extras for the local food bank.



Jesse Walburn took this whitetail on a November day he will always remember.

Hunting for the food bank is something I try to teach all of my students.

Students are not hard to find, especially if word gets out that you can help bring home the bacon. But that is not easy — hunting big game with nothing but a 13-year-old is challenging.

Last year a neighbor, David, approached me with the confession that he and his son, Jesse, had hunted hard all season for naught. He told me Jesse was starting to doubt his abilities. (This is actually a common theme.) I knew David to be a safe and ethical hunter so I gave them permission to hunt the ranch. They went out a few times and hunted from some of the fixed two-man ladder stands but were still jinxed.

One afternoon a big winter storm was coming in with deep blowing snow. This change in weather kicked the rut into full bore. I saw several bucks straight line trotting, their brains fried by hormones. Then I saw elk tracks! Deer are common on our place, but elk much less so. I called David who said they planned to come out later in the week. I almost shouted at him to pick Jesse up at school and get in the woods NOW!

The two of them eased along the logging roads in the snow and swirling wind. They saw some small bucks but



Learning to gather food teaches kids that all food comes from the good earth.

were not presented with a good shot. Then Jesse locked onto to a 5-point bull elk – only 35 yards away! The bull's head was down and behind a tree. Jesse was packing my 20 gauge rifled slug gun and had shot very well off hand at the range.

Jesse wanted to let fly at the bull. His dad wanted him to kneel and rest. The bull wanted to leave and he won the argument. All three learned a lesson.

But the day was still productive. They stalked a whitetail buck and Jesse made a great shot. David gave him a lesson in field dressing and I am now part of that family's history, in a good way.

Most of my beginning hunters go with me and I call the shot. We spend a lot of time on the rifle range and burn lots of powder. They must be very comfortable with the firearm they will hunt with because when the adrenalin is pumping they will need that training. They will get buck fever and not be able to find the sights on the gun or the target in the scope. They will shake all over and bang the barrel around. They may even shoot wild. But in the end they will score and the reward is phenomenal.

We all know that when the hammer falls the work begins. This is also true when mentoring. Your goal is to get that beginning hunter's skill level up to a point that they can hunt with confidence and bring home meat in good condition.

Field dressing does not have to be gross. I take lots of kids – both girls and boys – hunting and have never had anyone balk at field dressing. Take your time and make it interesting. Deer are not

filled with guts; they have hearts, lungs, livers and other cool stuff in there. Feel the heart, see how strong it is? Point out the diaphragm and explain why you don't want to place a shot on the intestine side of it. Let the hunter handle the knife as much as possible. Don't show them – coach them.

Even field dressing can be a very rewarding part of the mentoring experience. I think of Michelle, one of the first beginning hunters I ever took afield.

She is my assistant hunter ed instructor. She surprised me one day when she told me she had hunted very little and had never gotten a buck. We spent a lot of time at the rifle range and got her a buck that year. We actually missed him on one outing and got him later in the season. She ended up field dressing three deer that season. The moment of glory came when her older brother called her in a panic. He had a whitetail down and needed her to come quick with her knife and show him how to field dress.

We human beings have hunted all our history. But the future of hunting is by no means certain. If we want to maintain our traditions – and maintain the ethic of hunting the right way – we must be willing to mentor the new generations.

But the rewards are more personal – memories that will last your lifetime and that of a young person getting a start in the world.

Jim Watson owns and operates Spring Brook Ranch, where he raises bison and yaks in northwestern Montana.

Ignite a Fire in Kids' Imagination

By Brett Holmquist

Here are some simple rules to remember as you introduce kids to the Great Outdoors.

- Use your own curiosity to draw kids in. Authentic, wonder-full learning is contagious!

- Play dumb. Ask questions to prompt discovery among the young.

- Play survival. Kids love the elements of survival because they make tangible universal truths and make meaning of an otherwise complex web of connections in nature. Identify and eat common edible plants. Sleep in a backyard survival shelter. Experiment with making fire by friction. Make a throwing stick and practice. Collect and purify water without a manufactured filter.

- Thinks small. Young kids don't see "The Grand Canyon Vista," they see the spider spinning its web under the boardwalk.

- Children's passions are doorways to nature. Mud, bugs, hiding, poop, stories, snow, puddles, sneaking up, laughter, and a slew of others will get you a long way toward sharing a passion for nature with a young person. (And help you remember why you love it too.)

- Be a hero. Share your stories (especially around a campfire, even if it's in the backyard) about important experiences in nature and why you're grateful for them, what they taught you. This timeless tradition is heroic work, perhaps more than you will ever get to know.

- Go fish. As the saying goes, "I never met a criminal that was raised on fishing."

BHA member Brett Holmquist operates Ravenwood Outdoor Learning Center in northwestern Montana. <http://www.ravenwoodolc.org>

A Boy, a Bear and the Backcountry

By Galen Lyon

My dad, Dave Lyon, and I went on a black bear hunt across the bay from Homer, Alaska, where we live. It was October 11, four days before my 10th birthday.

We went to a trail in Kachemak Bay State Park called the Grace Ridge Trail. We left the harbor about 9 a.m., and in about a half hour we were at the beach trailhead. We have a landing craft, so we put the ramp down on the beach and unloaded our stuff.

Dave left me on the beach and then anchored our boat, and paddled back to the beach in a little kayak. We started hiking up, carrying our backpacks with some extra food and water and our rifles. We climbed over 2,000 feet.

We saw one bear as we were hiking up at about 1 p.m. It was in the willows, but we could only see its head and shoulders. No good shot there. Plus we couldn't see if it had a cub or not.

We snuck up on the trail for a better look, but we didn't see it. We kept climbing until we got to a lookout knob about half an hour later.



Galen says it felt good to bring home meat for his family.



Galen scans the terrain for bears.

We glassed for about 30 minutes. Finally, Dave spotted a bear about 400 yards away. It was too far to shoot, and anyways it was down through alder Hell, across a stream up through alder Hell and in to the middle of alder Hell. By the time we could get there it would be gone.

We didn't see another bear until about 3:00. It was 800 yards up the mountain. It was headed away from us, so Dave used a predator call to try to call it in. When he blew on the call the bear slammed on the brakes, turned, and started toward us.

Every now and again Dave would blow the predator call to keep it coming. It went into the trees about 400 or 500 yards away, and disappeared for nearly half an hour. Dave said that we should sneak down and see if it had stopped to eat berries. The minute he stood up, a coyote ran across a hill about 300 yards away.

While Dave was looking for the coyote, the bear came out of the woods and started across the hill right towards us! We laid back down and I rested my

gun on Dave's backpack. The bear kept on coming, and I took a shot and missed, but it didn't even flinch. It went behind a tree for a little bit, and then it came out broadside and stopped! I aimed and fired, it fell like it had been pole-axed.

We waited a few minutes, and then we walked down to the clearing where the bear was. It was 110 yards. We approached it cautiously, and Dave showed me how to check to make sure it was dead. I was so excited I could barely talk. I called my Mom and my best friend right away!

After we took pictures we started skinning it. I would work on one side while Dave worked on the other. Sometimes I would pull on a leg or some hide while he skinned.

The bear had almost no fat on it. It was an old sow, as we could tell by the teeth. Dave said she probably would not have survived the winter, since she didn't have enough fat to hibernate.

It took about an hour and a half to get the bear skinned, cut up and in meat bags.

Dave's pack had all the bear in it; I carried most of Dave's stuff, but I still had to help him get up with the pack. He said it weighed around 100 pounds.

It seemed to take forever to get back to the beach, but finally we got there and took off our packs. That sure felt good!

We cut the bear up the next day, and we got about 45 pounds of wrapped meat in the freezer. We mostly made stew and ground meat. We like bear chili. Dave also made some chorizo sausage. It sure felt good to bring meat home for my family.



Galen Lyon is the son of David Lyon, a co-founder of the Alaska chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers.

Forest Cop: Teamwork Needed to Curb Motorized Abuse of National Forests

BHA member Greg Munther sat down with Northern Region Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations Special Agent in Charge Jonathan Herrick to discuss finding solutions to the problem of illegal ATVs infringing on habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities. Herrick works out of the U.S. Forest Service Region 1 office. Here's the conversation:

BHA: Several years ago, the Forest Service Chief listed illegal and unmanaged ORV traffic among the largest threats to national forests. How is this reflected in law enforcement? How does the Forest Service decide how much law enforcement effort is to be spent on ORV enforcement?

Law enforcement priorities in the Northern Region of the Forest Service are closely aligned with the priorities of the agency and local line and staff officers (District Rangers, Forest Supervisors, and the Regional Forester).

Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) at the Districts, Patrol Captains at the Supervisors Offices, and the LEI staff at the Regional Office, are in constant communication with their respective line officer(s) to ensure that priorities are aligned.

When off-highway

vehicle (OHV) issues are a high priority for a line officer on a District, Forest or Grassland, then they are a high priority for LE. With that said, we recognize there will always be numerous other competing interests requiring LE attention whether it be OHV use; forest product theft; vandalism; fire investigation; cultural resource protection; crimes against people (forest users and employees); or any of the many other issues our LE personnel face and are expected to address.

Unlike some other violations that occur, we need to focus on the fact that "off road travel," can cause damage to vegetation and soil as well create negative visual impacts which may take years to recover from. Even just a few ruts through moist terrain can cause long term resource damage that can be very expensive to rehabilitate.

BHA: Our members get frustrated when they play by the rules, work hard, and hike into protected habitat, only to find illegal motorized riders already there. Is that a common complaint?

It is a complaint we often hear and especially prevalent during hunting season.

We highly encourage forest users to call TIPMONT (in Montana) or the natural resource crime reporting equivalent in their area when they encounter such violations. Reporting parties can call the Sheriff's Office, Fish and Game or any Forest Service office. These entities usu-

ally know how to get in touch with a Forest Service LEO. It is important that callers provide as much specific information as possible in order for LE to adequately follow-up. For example, license plate number, make/model of OHV, physical description of the rider including approximate height, weight, hair color, clothing, time and date of violation, and direction of travel.

Unfortunately illegal motor vehicle use seems to be more prevalent than in the past in the Northern Region of the Forest Service. Part of this may be due to increased regulatory emphasis or possibly due to the increased ownership and use of OHVs.

With many recent changes in travel management, we are working hard to educate users about the new rules and understand that some practices of the past, may no longer be acceptable. Some areas that used to be open to motor vehicle use may not be now. We need to educate traditional users as to why these areas have been closed and be able to direct them to other areas where motor vehicle use opportunities exist.

BHA: Mainstream hunters understand that lawbreakers and poachers are bad for the sport. How can we send the message that lawless riding is bad for legit ORV owners?

This article/interview is one way. It helps to continuously educate and inform people of what is acceptable and what is not. Mainstream hunters, outdoor enthusiasts, and all forest users need to be advocates for legitimate use. It is very difficult for the Forest Service to provide 100 percent of the education and prevention. It fosters an "us versus them" atmosphere when in fact the agency and mainstream users seek the same result; legitimate use; voluntary compliance with the regulations; and user accountability.

If we were to apply some basic principles of "community oriented policing" to this issue we would be able to partner with forest users to help affect the change we all want to see. Increased public involvement helps promote legitimate use by empowering users to assist in problem solving and forming solutions with the agency.

Public ad campaigns have also proven to be highly effective in educating users and shedding light on resource management issues. Some examples include "Respected access is open access," "Tread lightly," "Pack it in, pack it out" and "Only you can prevent wildfires."

'It is important to remember that penalties are decided by the courts, not by law enforcement.'

BHA: Can you describe the Forest Service law enforcement organization, its size and how that affects ORV enforcement?

The Northern Region area encompasses 25 million acres and is spread over 5 states. Included are 12 National Forests located within the perimeter of northeastern Washington, northern Idaho, and Montana; and the National Grasslands in North Dakota and northwestern South Dakota.

The structure of the Forest Service Law Enforcement organization in the Northern Region mirrors that of a traditional police agency with divi-

sions for uniformed patrol, investigations (both criminal and civil), administrative support, and senior management. The uniform division consists of 41 highly trained Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) whose primary responsibility includes patrolling the National Forests and Grasslands for purposes of crime prevention, detection, and apprehension of suspected violators. The officers training includes seventeen 17 weeks of intensive police training followed by 12 weeks of Field Training under the direct oversight of a designated Field Training Officer. Our uniformed officers also conduct limited civil and criminal investigations. The LEOs are supervised by four geographically placed Patrol Captains located in Coeur d'Alene, Helena, Hamilton, and Kalispell. They are in turn supervised by the Regional Commander in the Regional Office (Missoula).

There are seven Criminal Investigators/Special Agents geographically located throughout the Region. They traditionally conduct the more complex, longer term criminal and civil investigations. They are supervised by the Assistant Special Agent for Investigations located in the Regional Office (Missoula). The Commander and ASAC report directly to the Special Agent in Charge who reports to the Director, LEI, in Washington, DC.

There are seven administrative support specialists located throughout the Region that provide assistance to the field in a variety of ways such as budget tracking, human resources advice, electronic and paper records maintenance, evidence collection/custody, investigative support, and maintenance of training records as well as a myriad of other day-to-day duties.

The Forest Service also utilizes Forest Protection Officers (FPOs) to help support the law enforcement/resource protection mission of the agency. These are agency employees, very often seasonal employees, that work in Fire, Recreation, or some other discipline that receive 36 hours of Forest Protection Officer training. Once training is completed these employees are authorized by the Special Agent in Charge to issue Notices of Violation (tickets) to individuals al-

leged to have violated the prohibitions of Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations written to protect National Forest and Grasslands. These individuals are uniformed but are not Law Enforcement employees nor do they have the higher level of authority that our LEOs and Special Agents possess.

The primary individuals involved in OHV issues are the uniformed LEOs and the FPOs. These are the folks that are out patrolling and interfacing with forest users on a regular basis and therefore most often find the violations or have them reported to them. We have more and more seasonal employees at the District level employed as OHV or Snow Rangers whose primary responsibilities involve Travel Management. It is important to note however that our employees cover a vast amount of acres and often that limits our ability to be as responsive as we may like. This also encourages LE to focus efforts in the worst of problem areas whenever possible.

BHA: What are the biggest impediments to effective ORV law enforcement?

The success of Travel Management and effective OHV management hinges on education, engineering, and ultimately enforcement. It is not clear whether or not the public is fully aware of the travel plans and the motor vehicle use maps that govern travel management on federal public lands. We may need to seek additional venues for providing this information to the public.

While we in Law Enforcement spend a lot of time on education, mostly through public contact, it is a stark reality that each one of our LEOs in the Northern Region is responsible for patrolling approximately 600,000 acres. We cannot be everywhere and cannot always be as responsive as some would like or expect. That is why we need help from our partners, cooperators, and user groups to help with the education effort.

Likewise, the agency must continue to seek appropriate engineering infrastructure that can effectively restrict OHV use where it is no longer legal. Gates and physical barriers are often

an impediment to motor vehicle use but they are not infallible and often get vandalized so people can gain access.

Voluntary compliance is what we seek through education and engineering, however, when these fail to adequately reduce violations and protect the resources from being damaged, we need to rely on enforcement. The key is that we adequately address the former before we immediately jump to the latter.

BHA: BHA members are often frustrated when illegal riders on ORV are caught but not punished. What can BHA members do to improve chances that their observations of illegal ORV activity results in convictions?

Probably the best things BHA members can do is provide the most detailed information possible when reporting violations. The more specifics the better, such as a license plate, maybe a related vehicle, direction of travel, known address of violator. The more detailed information the more probable a conviction will be. Also complainants need to be willing to sign a statement and willing to identify the violator or appear in court as a witness.

We have received several reports where the caller has refused to do these things because they knew the violator and were concerned with retaliation. This really ties the hands of law enforcement.

As for the punishment phase, that is totally up to the judges and the courts. Again, education is important here. The courts need to know why the regulations are in effect, what the effects are, and what the long term implications are to resource managers. This will certainly help in the fines and sentencing.

BHA: How are penalties for ORV infractions established? Can ORVs be confiscated under current regulations?

Collateral schedules for violations of federal regulations are established within the federal judicial district as proposed by the administering agency and approved by the Federal District Court in that area. These are reviewed

every couple of years to see if they are still reasonable. At any given time, they can be recommended for an increase or even a decrease if the agency can justify it and the District Court agrees. A number of socio-economic and resource management factors ultimately steer the final decision.

OHVs used in the commission of a violation can be confiscated by law enforcement as they are in fact evidence of the alleged crime. This is similar to seizing the firearm of an alleged poacher. The fact of the matter however is the logistics of doing so are both time and cost prohibitive. An officer who seizes an OHV is then assuming the responsibility for moving, storing, and safekeeping the OHV until trial – also cost and time prohibitive.

Likewise, many courts have frowned upon such practice as it can appear to be overly punitive on the part of the LEO. Taking pictures of the OHV, the damage caused, identifying the alleged violator, and testifying to those events in court is usually more than enough to present our case to a judge.

We are well aware of the problems and are working diligently to decrease the number of violations but we cannot do it alone.'

BHA: What type of changes in ORV regulations or land management would help stop illegal ORV riding?

I do not think that changes in the regulations are needed at this time as the OHV regulations for National Forest and Grasslands were updated in 2005. What we need to do is continuously review our use of engineering techniques, appropriate signing, public education, and dissemination of information. We also need to continuously develop partnerships with user groups to help us be more effective.

In addition, we need to inform the public of projects underway that will increase OHV opportunities. For example, the development of legal trail riding op-

portunities is under development on several forests. We receive a lot of publicity for closing areas but not as much for the development of new projects that create more OHV trails.

BHA: How can BHA influence stronger penalties for ORV infractions?

It is important to remember that penalties are decided by the courts not law enforcement. Presently, the collateral fines for OHV violations on National Forest System lands in the Northern Region range from \$100 to \$300 dependent upon the specific regulation violated. However, a judge can impose a maximum penalty of six months in jail and/or a \$5,000 fine upon a defendant found guilty at trial. Likewise, a judge has the ability to impose any fine, including one that is lower than the recommended collateral fine.

If BHA wishes to influence federal penalties that effort needs to be done through the federal judicial system – U.S. District Courts, U.S. Attorney's Office, etc.

There is additional opportunity to influence regulations and penalties through the state judicial system but that would need to be coordinated with the state and local cooperators who assist our agency in OHV enforcement. USFS officers traditionally do not enforce OHV violations through the state judicial system.

BHA: What do you think the most important thing for our members to understand about this issue?

Travel management and travel planning requires a huge learning curve for the public, the users, and our employees. Anything our partners and cooperators can do to help agencies daylight the issues around ethical and acceptable OHV use on public lands would be extremely helpful.

Law enforcement is trying very hard to educate users and promote voluntary compliance. Results of these efforts will not always be immediately apparent. We are well aware of the problems and are working diligently to decrease the number of violations but we cannot do it alone. 

ARE YOU TOUGH ENOUGH FOR BACKCOUNTRY?

BY BARRY WHITEHILL

Thongs of folks streamed down the aisle at the March 2010 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Show in Reno. Most had that look of sensory overload as they plodded past Backcountry Hunters & Angler's booth, as we tried to recruit new members. These were obvious missed opportunities. There had to be a way to break their trance.

"Hey, are you tough enough to be part of this organization?" I asked a passerby.

That personal challenge did the trick. When asked, virtually everyone stopped to respond. That led to a quick pitch for new, "tough" members who embodied BHA ideals. It worked.

It also made me reflect on what is "tough?" Tough is a concept that goes hand-in-hand with hunting. I realize what exactly I think of as "tough" has evolved over the years in some surprising ways.

Different people are "tough" in different ways."

My definition of tough started in the way I grew up elk hunting. What I took for granted as typical for elk hunting often turned into a nightmare for others.

At the time, this was the only elk hunting I knew. Starting at age 11 or 12 I would drop into the dark holes of the Blue Mountains to push out elk to my Dad; then carry his gear out as he relayed packs of meat the 2,000-3,000 feet up steep canyons to the road. The steeper, deeper the canyon and farther from the road, the greater likelihood we would find elk. I didn't think anything of it. That was elk hunting. At age 14 I got my first bull. This started the unbroken string of packing meat each year on my back that still continues to this day.

Some years later, I took one of my first forays with a hunting partner other than my father. My hunting partner was

Wayne and he was no doubt tough.

Wayne had won a Washington State Wrestling Championship, somewhere around the 160-pound class in high school. He probably can still wrestle that weight today and hold his own. Wayne had hunting experience, but not for elk. He eagerly took me up on an offer to hunt elk in Washington's rugged Wenaha Wilderness Area.

Wayne made me start to realize that people are tough in different ways. Wayne's physical strength on the mat didn't necessarily transcend to the physical and mental challenges that come in a steep wilderness canyon under the hypothermic conditions of rain, sleet, and snow.

As we hunted in the fog, I lost him. But that wasn't apparent until I had trudged out to the trailhead in a dump of heavy snow. No Wayne.

After changing into a dry set of

clothes, I set off into the night with a lantern and my rifle. Once I made the saddle where we were supposed to meet, I fired my 7mm magnum. It's distinctive "Cah BOOM" didn't garner a reply. From there I started picking my way through cliffs back down the ridge I had come out on. I would stop every once-in-a-while in the total darkness to fire a shot. At about 9:30 p.m. I finally heard the return of a faint gunshot from way down the canyon.

When I worked closer I could see the glow of a fire in the dark abyss. Wayne had done the right thing and hunkered down to dry himself off once he realized he was lost. I hiked to his fire and heard his story.

Evidently in the snowstorm he had looped around a knob on the ridge we were working up, which sent him down instead. Wayne indicated that he planned to follow the river out at daylight. Fortunately I found him before that happened. This is one of those regions where roads are on the ridge tops and a stream goes a rough, LONG ways before it bisects civilization.

As we huddled around his fire, a nearly full moon rose through the clouds to illuminate the fresh snow.

I laid out the options: Spend the night shivering around the fire and hike out in the morning or set off in the moonlight. It wasn't hard to convince him to choose the latter. Where I found Wayne was the terminus of another ridge I had hunted previously. However, this ridge was steeper and it gained more elevation than the one we had dropped down, but it was a shorter distance to the road. We clawed our way up that route.

About three-quarters of the way out it became apparent that breaking trail in fresh snow on a steep slope was designed more for my tenacious Finnish-Scottish bloodlines than for Wayne's powerful, explosive moves. When we finally made the road in the wee hours of the next day, my gait had less of a wobble than his.

I thought I was tough that day. But reality is, my toughest day in the field can be put to shame by the first-hand stories told to me by sinewy Gwitch'in elders who grew up in the Brooks Range of northern Alaska. These men, in their 70's and 80's, still hunt there. The great

thing about listening to them telling their stories in Gwitch'in, is that they are constantly laughing. At the time, though, laughing was probably far from their minds.

These men tell stories about running down moose with snowshoes over long distances. They laugh about when, as young men, they were apprehensive about the physical requirements of basic training in the Army. When they found out the hardest challenge was a 20-mile march with a full pack they did laugh. In the Army they were receiving three square meals a day.

In their experience, that wasn't tough. Tough was having no food while breaking trail for their dog teams for several days in deep "zhah t'at" during the dead of an Arctic winter while searching for caribou to feed their hungry families. (Zhah t'at is the fine, powdery snow where you can't find tracks to follow for something to eat.)

That's tough. However, another Alaskan hunter showed me an entirely different facet of toughness.

My definition of tough has evolved over time to include more than mental and physical challenges. Now, one of the toughest things I can imagine as a hunter is becoming visible by being a dissenting voice in public forums against actions that endanger the opportunities to hunt in wild areas that have fed my family and my soul.

That admirable toughness is embodied in people like Mark Richards, co-chair of the Alaska Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. He has written editorial pieces that challenge some Alaska Department of Fish and Game decisions and Board of Game appointments. Mark "walks the talk" in both his lifestyle of living on the remote Kandik River and not being afraid to speak his mind against actions which threaten ethical hunting in wild areas.

I don't know if I can ever be that tough. In the meantime though, I will try to do my part. For me, it often means sharing quality backcountry hunting experiences with others, especially the next generation. If this is successful in contributing to sustaining hunting in wild areas, then I have been tough enough. ♣



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Backcountry Hunters & Anglers Chapter News

CO BHA speaks up for BLM backcountry

By David Lien

The Bureau of Land Management oversees some of the finest open range, desert canyons, and high-alpine valleys in the world. Colorado's BLM public lands are home to some of the nation's largest migratory deer and elk herds, and hunting, managed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, which plays an important role in sustaining Colorado's economic health.

BLM lands in Colorado recorded more than 700,000 hunting visits in 2009. These hunters, from across the state and nation, provide an economic boost to Colorado's rural economies. Hunting and other forms of outdoor recreation create jobs—more, in the long run, than oil and gas combined, because hunting and fishing economies don't pack up and go away once a gas field is exhausted. They do, however, go away when a gas field moves in, and 85 percent of the BLM lands in Colorado are open to oil and gas development. In contrast, only 1.7 percent are currently protected as wilderness...nationwide, only 4 percent of BLM lands are closed to OHVs.

Seven years ago, former Interior Secretary Gale Norton used an unprecedented interpretation of federal law (dubbed the "no more wilderness" policy) to remove federal protections from 500,000 acres of BLM lands in Colorado, and millions more across the West, under consideration for wilderness designation, making them vulnerable to activities such as mining and drilling. These generally low-elevation public lands are important winter range for mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and other species.

Recently, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar reversed Norton's flawed policy. Sportsmen's groups such as the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA), the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation



The annual Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers rendezvous is scheduled for June 10-12, 2011. See the CO BHA website for details/more information: <http://www.coloradobackcountryhunters.org>

Partnership, and others, support Secretary Salazar's action, because it will help protect dwindling big game and other wildlife habitat that's being decimated by oil and gas drilling on public lands across the West.

The BLM oversees about 8.4 million acres in Colorado, so there are plenty of other public lands that could be leased for mining, oil and gas drilling, or used for off-road recreation. The same is true of other states, where the proportion of land available for such uses far outstrips the acreage that could be protected.

BLM holdings are often considered the "land that nobody wanted." During the great homestead period, settlers took choice valley bottoms and ignored the ridges and mountain slopes. Today these ridges and slopes are superb big game country. Let's keep it that way.

CO BHA supports fair chase black bear hunting

By David Lien

The term "fair chase" has a very specific meaning in the hunting world. The Boone and Crockett Club defines it as "the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging

wild, native North American big-game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such animals."

Last November, a Colorado "hunter" tracked a black bear to its den...then shot it in the den. Such an act, although not currently illegal, is an unfortunate example of excessively poor judgment and a complete lack of fair chase ethics, and Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers fully supports the state wildlife commission's plans to draft a rule banning the hunting of bears in dens.

The Boone and Crockett Club was founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt and his hunting buddies. Fifteen years later (when Roosevelt was president), after an unproductive outing for black bear in Mississippi, one of the guides ran down a bear with dogs, then dragged the creature into camp for Roosevelt to shoot. He declined in disgust, explaining the principles of fair chase. Roosevelt understood that an ethical hunter is a person that knows and respects the animals hunted, follows the law, and behaves in a way that will satisfy what society expects of him or her as a hunter. That was clearly not the case in this unfortunate bear-killing incident. As Scott Limmer, a regional director for the Colorado Outfitters Association said, "We don't go out and hunt bears in dens. It's just not done."

Idaho chapter ups the ante

By Holly Endersby

The Idaho contingent has been busy this winter, formally establishing a state chapter with the following members in the line-up: Co-chairs, Blake Fischer and Derrick Reeves; Treasurer, Sean Carrier; Secretary, Jeff Barney and Representatives Larry Fischer, Steve Walker and Clay Hayes. Formation of the chapter occurred after membership meetings in Lewiston and Boise, both of which were well attended. Executive Director Jim Akenson was able to attend the Boise meeting and Holly Endersby was at both.

A group of BHA volunteers led by Derrick Reeves of Deary plans to attend the Big Horn Show in Spokane in April and help man our booth with fellow Washington BHA members. Jim Akenson, Holly Endersby, Rose Caslar, Sean Carrier, Brian Drake, Jeff Barney and Scott Stouder helped at the Idaho Traditional Bowhunter show in Boise this winter. As a chapter we decided to target those shows and events that are more narrowly focused on the backcountry angler and hunter rather than generic outdoor shows.

Derrick Reeves has thoroughly analyzed the USFS proposed Lochsa Land Exchange and has filed formal comments for BHA. While this exchange looks good from the Montana side of things, it is less desirable for wildlife on the Palouse. Some of the land listed for exchange represents some of the last public land easily accessible for hunting by residents of Moscow, Lewiston and surrounding areas. In addition, some of the exchange parcels represent some of the last old-growth forest lands on the Palouse. A big thanks to Derrick for all his work.

As always, BHA members continue to be involved in travel management planning both for the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. As a newly formed state chapter, our officers and representatives participated in a call to Senator Mike Simpson's chief of staff, Lyndsay Slater, in Washington, DC to voice our support for Secretary of the In-



Volunteers from Nevada BHA staff the organization's booth at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation convention in Reno earlier in 2011. Left to right, they are Karen Boeger, Dan Heinz, and Jake and Karen Rajala.

terior Ken Salazar's BLM wild lands directive. Mr. Slater said we were the only sportsmen's group to call in favor of the directive. We explained our rationale for supporting the directive and Mr. Slater encouraged us to stay in touch, which we will. Individual members also called in to support the wild lands directive.

In addition, several foundations asked us to send in letters to the editors and op-ed pieces to newspapers in the state on the BLM wild lands issue, which we did with varying success at getting them printed.

As always, Idaho's Legislative session is lively, replete with all kinds of proposed bills. Whenever a bill has the potential to impact hunting, angling or natural resources, BHA weighs in by asking members to call their representatives and senators. This year was no exception and issues like the ability of IDFG to manage hunting from ATVs quickly rose to the top of our comment list.

In the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, progress is being made to have suggested legislative language together by August. We hope that wilderness, wild and scenic river designation and a national recreation area will be part of the legislative package along with robust economic help for small communi-

ties and Clearwater and Idaho counties. As part of the economic plan a 180-mile ATV route, strictly in the front country and across several land ownerships, is being recommended as well as the land protection portion of our work.

We continue to seek ways to work with the USFS and BLM offices across the state, especially in areas where OHV abuse is rampant. Volunteers to watch over public land are always welcome. Contact an Idaho BHA officer to volunteer!



Utah Co-Chair Bill Eckerle, BHA board members John Pollard, Jay Banta round up new members at the Salt Lake City Sportsmen's Expo.

MT legislature puts sportsmen on the defensive

By Greg Munther

Sportsmen, fish and wildlife were in the crosshairs of the 2011 Montana Legislature with well over 100 related bills introduced this session.

One major assault on sportsmen access to streams was HB 309 which would redefine ditches off limits to hunters and fishermen. Almost any irrigation structure or diversion could render a stream to be defined as a ditch and therefore exempt from legal stream access afforded under the 1985 Stream Access Law. Several BHA members including Ray Gross (Dillon), Charlie Johnson (Stevensville), Jim Posewitz (Helena), Tim Aldrich, Dick Solum, Bruce Farling, Bill Geer (all Missoula), Al Luebeck (Butte), JW Westman (Park City) and MT Chairman Greg Munther joined over 400 other sportsmen in the overflow Senate Hearing to oppose this bill.

Other bills assaulting fish and wildlife and backcountry included HB 148 allowing motor vehicles off roads for game retrieval, SB 144 prohibiting free ranging bison, SB301 prohibiting FWP from buying land, SB312 further weakening MT Environmental Policy Act, and SB 312 weakening mining laws. Working with the Montana Wildlife Federation, MT BHA helped sponsor a legislative meet-and-greet in Helena, to deliver our message directly to legislators. We have helped turn the tide in some cases and improve some otherwise bad bills, as of press time.

High Country News (3/7/2011) features proposed electrical transmission corridors proposed across Montana that threaten Montana backcountry. Local private landowners are opposing proposed lines on private lands, therefore pushing routes onto our public lands. Huge high voltage lines will create new construction and maintenance roads across pristine public wildlands. In addition, powerline corridors threaten sage grouse populations. The Mountain States Transmission Intertie would affect wild-

lands from Townsend-Three Forks to Butte-Anaconda and then south past Dillon and into Idaho. The proposed Montana Alberta tie project extends north from Great Falls to the Canadian Border west of Sweetgrass.



BHA is exploring the possibility of a special early rifle deer season in the Superior National Forest's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Minnesota BHA supports access, backcountry opportunity

Minnesota BHA member Darrell Spencer is part of a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) working group exploring the possibility of a special October (early) rifle deer season in the Superior National Forest's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

In addition, Minnesota BHA members wrote their state legislators asking them to oppose bill HF 332 ("No Net Gain" of public lands). This bill would serve to deprive sportsmen and women of the incalculable benefits of public hunting and other lands. As one MN BHA member said, this bill "is nothing less than a short-sighted giveaway of public resources at the cost of every other value we hold dear, and the whole plan is an egregious swipe at the public lands legacy of hunter-conservationists like Teddy Roosevelt and today's hunters and anglers."

B&C disallows game farm bulls

(From the Boone & Crockett Club website Trophywatch. February 2011.)

A photo of a giant bull has been flying around the Internet for quite sometime under the heading, New P&Y World's Record, Colorado. Here's the real story.

This bull was entered in B&C's 28th Awards Program on a Colorado elk tag with an entry score of 405-1/8 and has been rejected.

The Boone and Crockett Club's records department, with assistance from a Colorado B&C Official Measurer and a Colorado Division of Wildlife game warden determined that this bull was taken on a game farm in Idaho in 2010.

The same hunter attempted to enter another bull scoring 402-7/8 reported to have come from the same ranch in Colorado in 2009. This bull has also been rejected.

Boone and Crockett Club's Records Program, since its inception in 1906, does not accept or recognize trophies raised for the purpose of shooting on game farms, preserves, or within escape-proof enclosures.

No game laws were broken and no charges have been filed. It is not against the law to fraudulently attempt to enter trophies into the records book, just not smart.

B&C records data is a useful tool for game managers in monitoring the success or failure of big game management programs. This data is also a valuable tool for policing itself.

The state of Colorado offers tremendous elk hunting opportunities to the sportsmen, including trophies, but two bulls over 400 from the same ranch, by the same hunter in back to back years? Even if this anomaly was not brought to the attention of the Club by an Official Measurer, it would have been flagged by the Records Department processing the entires and doing its due diligence.

Dating back to 1830, the state of Colorado has produced only five bulls that score over 400 typical. Only one was taken in the last 24 years.

B.H.A. MEMBER PHOTOS

Ed Schmidt, of Bozeman, Mont., hunted hard in deep snow and subzero temperatures for this moose, taken in the Spanish Peaks in 2010.



Hamilton Platt, 13-year-old son of BHA member Stephen Platt, enjoyed hunting ducks this fall at the Freezout Lakes Waterfowl Management Area in Montana. They live in Missoula.



Wyatt Reeves, 12, took and helped pack out this whitetail buck while hunting with his father, Derrick, near their home in the Idaho panhandle.

Check out BHA's group page on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=45443257820>





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