



# NEWS RELEASE

Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument

1839 S. Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257

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Op-Ed – *Monumental Outlook Over the Horizon*

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By Tina Terrell, Forest Supervisor

## Backcountry Horsemen of California

The Back Country Horsemen (BCHC), a service organization was formed here in Tulare County in 1986, with several volunteer units on the Sequoia National Forest. There are several organizations that are active in the Sequoia National Forest and Giant Sequoia National Monument. They split their service between “on-the-ground” projects, and educational outreach efforts focused on the next generation. With a passion and love for the backcountry, they continue the tradition of packing stock into the backcountry and teach safe and ethical use of our public lands.

### *Teaching a stewardship message.*

The BCHC members teach a stewardship message highlighting the *Leave No Trace* wilderness ethics donating time, equipment, and animal stock. Members present “Gentle Use” packing workshops to Boys and Girl Scouts, 4-H groups, schools and community groups. They conduct horse and mule packing and camping demonstrations, at Butterfield School Days, the MyForest Summit, and many other civic events. At Frontier High School in Bakersfield, the BCHC unit offers a back country animal packing curriculum to Future Farmers of America students.

Members also pack-in supplies for backcountry experiences for *At Risk* youth, provide *Leave No Trace* education for Pyles Boys Camp Leadership Training, along with training for Boys Scout Horsemanship Merit Badges. They assist the Southern California Sportsman Association, and the Safari Club with youth programs including the Porterville Fair *Hug-a-Tree* program on Farm Day. Wilderness Riders is another educational outreach program for trained back country stock users. These activities all drive home a simple message, protect our wildlands through *Gentle Use* skills.

### *Here is where our imaginations of the west take form.*

Many BCHC units travel into the six wilderness areas in the Sequoia to maintain several historic Forest Service guard stations which once housed the early forest ranger fire patrolmen. Trout Meadow and Grey Meadow cabins are in the Golden Trout Wilderness, and Manter Meadow cabin is in the Domelands Wilderness. The volunteers perform basic maintenance on the cabins, provide visitor information during the summer, maintain the administrative and public grass pastures around the cabins, work on trails, and pack out trash. At the public pastures of Big Meadow and Paloma Meadow on the Kern Plateau, they remove the fence for winter recreation when the snowpack arrives, and replace it yearly for the summer recreation season.

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This organization also provides support for wilderness restoration projects. Last year, they packed in supplies on horses and mules to the Fungston Meadow restoration project to remove velvet grass, an invasive species that threatens high elevation native grasses. They made eight round trips through the Golden Trout Wilderness delivering approximately 3,500 pounds of supplies, and then, turned around and packed out trash and personal items for volunteers.

One unit teamed up with Los Angeles kids and cleared the Old Hockett Trail of travel hazards and trash throughout the summer.

Another unit worked in the Domeland Wilderness, to restore and maintain trails to Manter Meadow. Since the Manter Fire (2000), many trails throughout the fire area are plagued with falling dead trees. Last season, four different work parties, maintained 12-15 miles of trails, removed 86 fallen trees, and cut down overgrown thorny whitethorn along trails. Members also installed and maintained facilities at wilderness trailheads that include visitor information stations, horse hitching posts, corrals and restrooms.

Our thanks, and our cowboy hats are off to these dedicated mounted volunteers! They deliver many services that help access and protect the “*wildness*” of our national forests.

If you would like to volunteer, schedule a workshop or presentation, please contact: Bonnie Searcy - Sequoia Unit, (559) 798-1913, or Anne Lang - Kernville Sierra Unit, (760) 378-2486.

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