



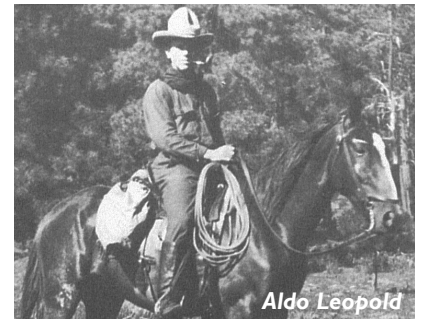
Back Country Horsemen
of America



THE
WILDERNESS
SOCIETY

WILD RIDERS

A Partnership Between the Back Country Horsemen of America and The Wilderness Society



TWS Mission

To protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places.

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BCHA Mission

The purpose of this organization shall be:

To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness

To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.

To assist the various government and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.

To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise use of the back country resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.

To foster and encourage the formation of new state Back Country Horsemen's organizations.

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Wild Riders is a partnership between the Back Country Horsemen of America and The Wilderness Society to "insure that traditional, historical and responsible pack and saddle stock use in wilderness areas is recognized, protected, supported and sustained consistent with the capabilities of the land." We believe that trails are a critical way to connect Americans to the outdoors and to insure our wild heritage remains cherished and protected.

PUBLIC LANDS RECREATION: CONNECTING AMERICANS TO THE OUTDOORS

Each year millions of visitors recreate on public lands, places within our national forests and national parks, and untold more on Bureau of Land Management lands. They hike, bike, view wildlife, horseback ride, fish and canoe across the hundreds of millions of acres we are lucky to call every American's birthright.

In fact, recreation is the main reason a lot of us get out on our public lands.

ACTIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION DRIVES OUR RURAL ECONOMY

Recreation is a key economic driver for many of the rural communities that neighbor public lands. According to the Outdoor Industry Foundation, "active outdoor recreation (a great deal of which takes place on federal public lands) has a **\$730 billion annual impact** on the U.S. economy and **supports 6.5 million jobs nationwide**. Active outdoor recreation also generates \$289 billion annually in direct retail sales and services across the U.S. and \$88 billion annually in federal and state tax revenues."¹

BUDGET CUTS THREATEN RECREATION ACCESS

While recreation is one of the top uses on our public lands, it is also facing traumatic cuts in FY 2013 – cuts that will further reduce the ability for all Americans to access the lands they love. **Trails programs are facing an additional 9 to 10% cut as of January 2013, on top of already drastically reduced funding levels. This means depleting the already bare-bones resources we have for things like trail maintenance and safety improvements, and support to youth and other volunteer programs that are some of the only sources of trail maintenance going on these days on our federal public lands system.**

Our groups understand that we face difficult economic times. That's why The Wilderness Society is sponsoring wilderness trails stewardship efforts in several states, and BCHA has an active volunteer base that has worked hand in hand with land managers for years to maintain, build and improve safety for trails all over the country. In fact in 2010 alone, BCHA's volunteers donated over 315,000 hours of volunteer time or **an equivalent of \$11.9 million dollars**. All because **The Wilderness Society and BCHA's volunteers love to connect people to our public lands** and what better way to do that than make sure they are **accessible to people now and in the future**.

Photo credit: Sage Paulson



BCHA's volunteers have donated over 2.6 million hours of volunteer time to trail maintenance over the past 16 years

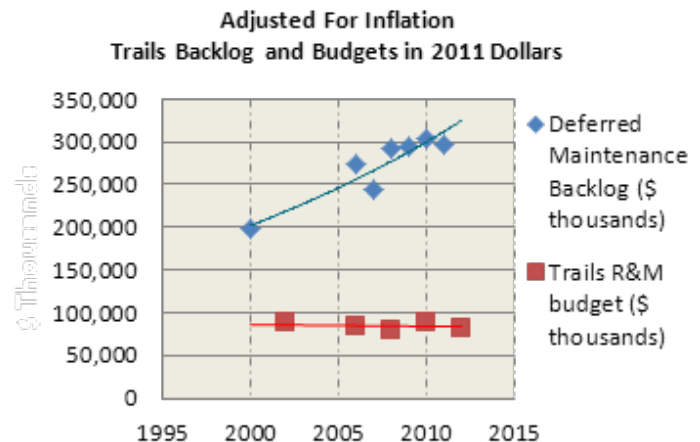
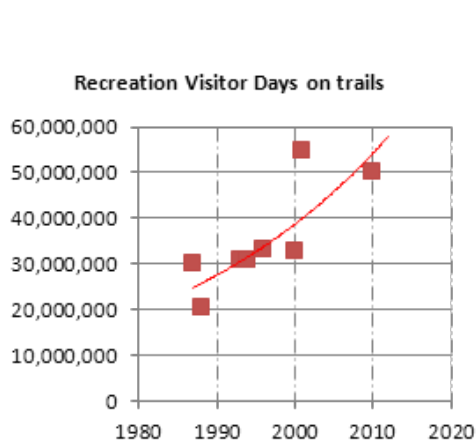
2012 HIKE THE HILL WILD RIDERS PRIORITIES

We need your support to protect foundational trail budgets

In FY12 the Forest Service trails budget was cut 4% from FY11. However modest this cut may appear, it belies the real and longstanding crisis the trails budget is facing. Last year's cut was just one in decades' worth of stagnant trail budgets that have collectively resulted in "death by a thousand cuts" for our National Forest trail system.

The Forest Service trails budget line item has remained flat for over 30 years, increasing only 1.75% since 1980 after adjusting for inflation. Meanwhile, the miles of trails have grown 56.9% since 1977 to accommodate the 376% growth in annual visitor-days on the trail system. The trail maintenance backlog had reached \$296 million as of FY 2010, and continues to grow despite the fact that the trails program leverages thousands of hours of trail work from volunteers each year.

Currently, only 21% of trails are maintained to standard.



Longstanding maintenance needs have now been drastically exacerbated in the more than 10 million acres of forest land affected by Mountain Pine Beetle damage. The number of dead trees falling over our trails every year could be 10 times the average amount, and it could continue for periods of up to 20 years after an area is affected by the beetle, dramatically adding to the already huge maintenance backlog. This has the potential to result in the biggest trail management challenge the Forest Service has experienced since the trail system was initially constructed in the first half of the last century.

This problem is further exacerbated by the rapid defunding of other programs that have long been used to fill the growing gap in the day-the-day trails operations budget of the Forest Service. For example, the Legacy Roads and Trails program was cut by 50% in FY11, and the Recreational Trails Program is threatened with extinction altogether during the reauthorization process for the Highways Bill.

Please support continued funding for Forest Service trails in the FY13 budget process.

Other programs Congress can support to protect trail access:

- Recreational Trails Program (Funded by the Highway Trust Fund)
- Legacy Roads and Trails
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Secure Rural Schools reauthorization



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Photo credit: "Chinese Wall in the Bob Marshall Wilderness" by Betty Applebaker