

# Back Country Horsemen Gila Chapter Meeting Minutes

## Feb 17, 2026

Grant County Extension Office, Silver City, New Mexico  
25th Anniversary  
Start time: 6:06pm  
Prepared by: Silke Schneider

Attendance: David Rigoli, David Imler, Nancy Imler, Joan Bacon, Cheryl Roth, Jean Hill, Gerry Engel, Laura Wlosinski, Donna Tillmann, Richard Waller, Michele McGorky, Bill Pellerin, Jennifer Pellerin, Deborah Whittemore, Rawlings Lemon, Pat Bulls, Rebecca Harrington, Silke Schneider

Welcome new member: David Rigoli

New Membership Committee: Deborah Whittemore, Jennifer Pellerin - Thank you

A motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting was made by Nancy Imler and seconded by Donna Tillman.

Finance Report by David Imler: Balance Checking \$56,780

Current members: 50

(see attached report for details)

State Delegate Report: Joan Bacon and Gerry Engels

Unfortunately the audio for the zoom meeting did not work very well.

The BCHA Double Diamond Award is an annual award to recognize BCHA chapters for exceptional volunteer projects, educational projects, and outstanding service records from the previous year. It is a high honor and will be presented at the BCHA national meeting in April of this year.

Our Gila Chapter is hoping to receive this honor for outstanding trail projects, Continental Divide Trail work, and completion of eight new corrals at Woody's, Gila Cliff Dwellings.

Search and Rescue Report: Laura Wlosinski



No new SAR operations since our last meeting. Search and Rescue had a horse component, but not at this time. If anybody would like to volunteer with SAR, please contact Joan Bacon or Laura for details.

Trash Pick up project: Cindi DeCapiteau is absent today. No date set.

Spring Trail Projects: Melissa Green

Please check Melissa's detailed project emails. It is very important to let Melissa know ahead of time if members would like to work on any of the projects. Do not show up without communicating with Melissa first, for planning purposes. If you are not on Melissa's email list, please contact Cheryl Roth to put you on.

Gerry Engels points out that thanks to Melissa's contract with BCH, trail work has expanded and hiking groups have gotten involved. A lot of work is getting done and volunteers are having fun! Thanks to pack animals water and food can be brought to the projects.

Licence plates: \$25 per licence plate. Let Cheryl know right away if you would like one.

Pack Clinic: Russel Lewis, Jayne Hempstead, Gerry Engel, and Clay Griffith will show us what's involved when a packing string is used for projects.

Saturday, February 21st, 10am to 2pm, Dragonfly trailhead. Bring a chair and lunch. If you'd like help with fitting your packsaddle, you may bring your equine.

Only trucks with trailers in the first parking lot, all other vehicles please use the second parking lot.

Trail Days, April 25th (Continental Divide Trail Days) in Gough Park:

BCH participates with a booth. Flyers, banners, public interaction. In the past we had log cutting and branding for the public, but we may not have this activity this year for insurance reasons. Volunteers can sign up to staff the booth at the March meeting.

Give Grandly, May 2nd, Gough Park:

A community fund raiser for non-profits for Silver City. The public can make donations to their favorite non-profit organization online. Anything over \$500 will get matching funds. Cheryl will be out of town during that event, David Imler will get a sign up for volunteers.

New Business:

Richard Waller will give a presentation at our next meeting on his recent Patagonia, South America, Pack trip adventure.

Pat Bulls will have a "Trail Trial Day" in the near future. More details at the next meeting.

6:45pm Break for 25th Anniversary Cake

Our 25th Anniversary Speaker - Gerry Engel - on the history of our Gila Chapter

- National Organization, 6 chapters in New Mexico
- Reasonable use of horses and mules in backcountry
- 1973 BCH started in Montana
- Successful nationwide, trail maintenance
- Local chapter started in 2001 by Jerry Thompson
- Strictly horse organization, 60 to 100 miles of trail maintenance per year
- In 2021 partnered with Melissa Green, expanded to 170 of trail maintenance in 2025
- Melissa partners with hiking groups and greatly advanced trail projects
- Got grants from State, Forest Service to pay Melissa, buy food for projects and reimburse mileage for volunteers
- Trail work will be more dependent on BCH because of limited forest service trail crews
- Past fires and floods have been tough on trails in the wilderness, some trails are gone
- Gerry talks in much detail about various trails that are accessible at this time
- Please get in touch with Gerry or Melissa for detailed information on existing trails

Meeting adjourned at 7:18pm