



Annual Newsletter

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January 2017

Hear Ye - Hear Ye - Read all about it!

"ZBE Becomes a Chapter of BCH of MN"

Since the Zumbro Bottoms Equestrians organization was formed in the fall of 2013, we have been busy representing the interests of horse campers and riders at Zumbro Bottoms by working with the DNR to maintain and enhance the trails and the 3 camp grounds. Over the past 3 years we have partnered with the Minnesota Trail Riders Association (MTRA) and the new Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota (BCH-MN) to do projects and advocate for the horse rider's interests at Zumbro Bottoms.

During this time there have been discussions of whether ZBE should be an independent organization or affiliate with another organization. Since the interests of ZBE (preserving the use of trails for horses and maintaining trails and camp facilities) align so closely with those of the BCH-MN, the officers and board members, after communicating with all of the ZBE members, have decided ZBE should become a chapter of the BCH of MN as of Jan 2017. The "Zumbro Bottoms Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota" are the first local or regional chapter of the MN state organization.

The board members have been busy selecting officers, writing by-laws and doing the things necessary to get the chapter up and running. In order to become an official chapter there must be 15 or more members in the chapter, elect officers and establish by-laws. The annual dues for the chapter are those set by the state organization (\$25 single and \$30 family) with \$8 and \$10 (respectively) retained by the chapter. The balance of the dues are membership in the BCH of MN and Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA). With the national dues comes the BCHA newsletter published and mailed 4 times a year.

The officers elected at the Jan 29th meeting include:

- Barb Partington - President
- Open - Vice President
- Cindy Fitting - Treasurer
- Diane Freese - Secretary
- Barry Saylor - Director; chapter representative to State BCH-MN Board
- OPEN - Assistant Director
- Steve Freese - Webmaster (Newsletter, Facebook, Website)
- OPEN - Assistant Webmaster

There are several benefits of becoming a chapter of BCH-MN that members need to be aware of:

- Affiliation with a national organization gains us the ability to watch over equine interests in MN and across the country. BCHA is available to us when we need help in MN.
- BCH-MN collects and reports all volunteer hours and their value to land managers each year. The volunteer hours of all riders (members and non-members) are tallied and reported.
- Because BCH-MN is a 501c3 non-profit organization, this non-profit status makes donations given to the Chapter tax deductible, thus enhancing fund raising efforts. To make donations tax deductible to the donor, the donation will go to the state organization and then be passed down to the ZB Chapter.
- BCHA and their state chapters have good rapport with land managers.

The ZB BCH-MN officers and volunteers fully intend to keep the momentum of the past 3 years alive and well by continuing to have strong relationships with the DNR staff members managing the trails and camps at Zumbro Bottoms and take advantage of the benefits the BCH of MN and BCHA bring to us. We hope that as past members of ZBE everyone will join the ZB Chapter of BCH-MN and bring along a few new friends. If you have any questions or comments about this change, be sure to share them with an officer.

President's Note 2016

Zumbro Bottoms Equestrians has had a productive year. We have really good people that care about Zumbro Bottoms. Their passion is contagious! Our organization is a work oriented volunteer group. This year we had 5 organized work days/weekends with a total of 596 volunteer hours!!

- April 16, 17 - The year started out with our trash clean up weekend. Last year's event went so well, we thought we would try for a 2nd day. We were blessed with good weather. 29 volunteers showed up!! Some came for the weekend, some just for the day.
- June 1 – Walnut Grove – Install new high tie, repair existing high tie. 5 volunteers
- June 4 – National Trails Day – Joint effort between ZBE, MTRA and the DNR. Multiple tasks were accomplished. 16 volunteers
- July 24 , 25 – Trail clean up – SE Minnesota had several bad storms and high winds which brought down many trees. 10 volunteers spent hours on the trail cutting trees off the trail. A special thanks to Ken Olson (Pine Island) and Ned Wippermann (Champlin). Both of them figured out a way to tie a chainsaw to their horses.
- October 18 – Workday – 11 volunteers, plus 3 park staff - 87 new fire pits installed, trees were wrapped with wire to protect them from beaver damage

Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota (BCH-MN) formed in 2016. In December ZBE sent out a resolution to become a BCH-MN chapter. Becoming a BCH-MN chapter will have several benefits to our group. One of which is ZBE will then have 501c3 non-profit status.

This would also mean a name change for ZBE. It is a requirement of all chapters to have “Back Country Horsemen” in the group name. Going forward we will be called “Zumbro Bottoms Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota” (ZB BCH-MN) By-laws will need to be created and approved. The biggest negative to becoming a BCH-MN chapter is our annual dues will have to go up. For a family membership \$18 has to be sent to the national Back Country Horseman. \$2 needs to be sent to the state level. A good percentage of ZBE members are also BCH-MN members, so for them it would be a savings.

When ZBE has 501c3 non-profit status, we can legally have fund raisers with the proceeds going towards Zumbro Bottoms projects. This will satisfy one of the DNR requirements for raising \ spending \$\$ at ZB.

We have also started to publicize our monthly meetings on Facebook and sending out emails invitations. This has had positive responses. We have had Zumbro Bottoms supporters drive several hours to be able to attend our meetings. There is some of that passion for ZB coming thru!!

ZBE will continue to publicize our meetings. Meetings are held at BJ's Bar and Grill, Whippoorwill, MN.

Please join us!
Happy Trails,
Barb Partington

BCH of MN - First Year - First Project - Luce Line Trail

By Ken Olson, Pine Island, MN.

On Feb 8, 2016 the organizing committee of Back Country Horsemen of MN adopted their by-laws and a few months later officially became a non-profit organization and were accepted as a new state organization by BCHA at the 2016 Annual meeting. Many of the BCH-MN members have been actively involved in horse trail and campground maintenance work for several years through the Minnesota Trail Riders Association and other groups. But now it was time for BCH of MN to get on the map and organize a trail work project of our own!

The Luce Line horse trail (an abandoned railroad bed that runs from western MN all the way into the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St Paul) runs parallel to the paved bicycle trail. A 1/3 mile section of the horse trail between Silver Lake and Winsted was very wet and needed to be moved to drier ground on the other side of the bike trail. The trouble was that there were a lot of trees, brush and tall weeds to be cleared. A good "starter project" for a "start-up" organization!

Three Backcountry Horsemen members met with the DNR Trail Manager, Kristy Rice, in July to scout out the work and make plans. Since the project seemed like it would take 2 days, the dates of Sept 9 and 10 were chosen. A trailhead parking area near Silver Lake was determined to be an overnight camping spot. Members were notified and things were all set.

BUT the summer of 2016 was one of the wettest ever recorded in Minnesota history! A week before the work days the reroute trail area was partially under water and the mosquitoes were so thick that no one was going to be able to work! So "plan B" was developed - reschedule to Oct 14 and 15 with hopes of dry weather.

On Oct 10th a phone call to Kristy Rice (DNR) determined that things were looking "pretty good" and in *Minnesotan* that means "we go for it"! Since a couple of our workers were busy harvesting corn and soybeans we determined that we needed to start early on Saturday and if we didn't get done, finish on Sunday. Five eager-beaver workers showed up on Saturday with the right tools and ready to work. To our delight by mid afternoon we had exceeded our expectations and completed the reroute!

As the photos show - there was a lot of brush and quite a few trees that needed to be removed but we were up to the task and with the use of our President's pull-behind brush cutter, the trail was open and ready for use. One wet spot will require some gravel but the DNR can handle that so riders should have a good trail by next spring.

Although the work was challenging, BCH-MN members are already talking about other projects to take on next year. It looks like 2017 will be the year to establish 2 or 3 regional chapters of BCH of MN with each of them taking on projects in their areas. This wasn't a huge project but we're on our way! Photos on next page.



Trash Cleanup Day
April 16- 17, 2016

This is our 2nd annual ZBE trash cleanup day.

Last year went well, but we were not able to get to all of the trails. We thought a 2nd day would be beneficial. Craig Bloomer, DNR Parks and Trails supervisor was willing to issue us a 2 day special use permit for the weekend. Since the trails are not open to horses in April, this permit allows us to ride to the remote trails.

Mother Nature blessed us with warmth and sunshine.

Saturday morning we all met in West Camp at the pavilion. Small groups of 2 to 4 people picked the trail they wanted to work on. With garbage bags in hand, the groups headed out on the trail. Those that did not bring horses worked around the campground or drove to the bridge and picked up trash alongside the road.

After a potluck supper, Robert and Amy Heflin from Iowa talked about Back Country Horsemen Association. They were instrumental in getting Back Country Horsemen of Iowa started. We had a good turnout. Many of those attending joined the newly formed Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota.

Sunday morning was spent picking up trash on the road to the West Campground.

We had 29 volunteers. A couple came all the way from Duluth to help us out!

The weekend was a success!

29 volunteers – worked 181.5 hours!



Cindy Fitting with her crew:

Taj and Miley

National Trails Work day @ Zumbro Bottoms – June 4, 2016

We had a successful work day. 16 volunteers arrived with work gloves and tools in hand. All came willing and ready to help.

Tasks accomplished

- Gravel under high ties. Thank-you to Barry Saylor for bringing his utility tractor.
- Mulch put around small trees. MTRA grant paid for the mulch.
- Replace\repair of “You are Here” signs. DNR supplied materials.
- Replaced missing shingles on Central Camp shelter.
- Rings installed on high ties. ZBE purchased the rings.
- Repair of 2 wheel barrows. ZBE purchased the parts.
- Repair of picnic tables. DNR supplied the boards/bolts.
- Tightening of high tie cables, cables around the shelter and cable around the well.

A big thank-you to Zumbro Bottoms Equestrians. They coordinated work tasks with the DNR and supplied lunch for all the workers.

Thank-you to all the volunteers who helped make this day a success!! Many hands make light work.

The 16 volunteers worked 83 hours.



Lunch supplied by Zumbro Bottoms Equestrians
[More photos on page 14](#)

New Tie Lines at Walnut Grove - Zumbro Bottoms

By Mark Fitting - Plainview, MN.

The Zumbro Bottoms Equestrians (ZBE) group installed new tie lines at Walnut Grove as part of the National Trails "work day" June 4, 2016. ZBE repaired the existing tie line, installed a new tie line and added a hitching post. Walnut Grove is a popular lunch and rest stop at Zumbro Bottoms. The need for repairs and improvements were over do because of safety concerns and damage to trees from tying horses to them.

The process started with discussions with DNR Trails and Forestry managers in the fall of 2015. It was decided the best solution and location would be additional tie lines. ZBE provided labor and materials with the help of donations. ZBE would like to thank Bill Page, horse rider and owner of Page's Welding shop in Zumbrota for donating the pipe and welding for the new lines and Mark Fitting donated the pipe to repair the existing lines - thanks Bill and Mark! Angie Murphy, owner of COWPOKES Western Shop from Kellogg and Ken Olson donated the use of there UTV's to get the materials up to Walnut Grove.

Volunteers donated their time, personal tools and equipment, and a 4-wheeler to get everything up the steep hill from Rescue Point E to Walnut Grove. Since Walnut Grove is on the opposite end of the forest from the West Assembly Area where most of the national trails day projects were planned, we decided to install the tie lines on Wednesday, June 1st. Making the list and gathering the materials started several weeks before.

The five volunteers - Steve Freese, Lee Partington, Ken Olson, Angie Murphy, and Mark Fitting met at 9am to load the tools and materials and started up the hill. It took several trips and a little exercise to get up the steep part, even with the UTV and 4-wheeler. At Walnut Grove, we divided the tasks into 3 groups and got started. I was surprised that repairing the old tie line took as long as installing a complete new set. The third crew - Angie, cleared brush, cleaned the fire pit and installed a new set of "Pack it in, Pack it out" signs. I've always been amazed when park users can carry full containers out on the trails but can't manage to hall their garbage out! After a lunch break we took a few pictures, loaded tools and garbage and headed back down. I believe the tie lines will provide service for many years and help make Walnut Grove even more enjoyable.

[See photos on page 13](#)

Trail clearing workdays

July 24 -25, 2016

The summer storms raised havoc with all the trails in SE Minnesota. Heavy rains resulted in erosion and the strong winds brought down numerous trees. DNR Parks and Trails had a back log of trails to clear and fix. On July 24 and 25, ZBE coordinated volunteers to clear trees from the trails at Zumbro Bottoms. Ken Olson (Pine Island, MN) and Ned Wippermann (Champlin, MN) brought chainsaws. Ken had a handmade leather scabbard, which made for ease of attaching the saw to the horse. With some baling string and some creative thinking\tinkering, Ned was able to attach his chainsaw to the horse and still be able to ride comfortably. We concentrated on the East side of the river, getting the more heavily used trails cleared.

Thanks to all volunteers!

The 9 volunteers worked 65 hours!



Kari Lenz

Lee Partington

Ned Wippermann

Barb Partington

ZBE Directors meeting with Zumbro Bottoms DNR Managers

December 2016

Maintenance of the Zumbro Bottoms campgrounds in SE Minnesota is the responsibility of the Frontenac State Park Supervisor, Caleb Jenson. Chad Gelner is responsible for the Forests. Craig Bloomer, SE Minnesota DNR Parks and Trails Supervisor, is in charge of the trails. Listed below is the high lights of the main discussion items.

Campground update

Complaints are down this year

Central well – water test failed twice – on the 3rd cleaning it passed

Revenue is down a little from last year – approximately \$65,000 in revenue. Attributed to a rainy year and mosquitoes were horrible.

MTRA \$ left – enough to get 6 more cross members for high ties. These will be installed on the high ties that have cables going to the ground.

Camp users have moved a good majority of the newly installed fire rings.

Old fire rings are available for \$10 each. Fill out envelope and put \$ in the money box.

More picnic tables are available at the state park. Need to be assembled. Work project for 2017

Frostbite Report

Frostbite – went well. Like last year, users were asked to pay when they entered the park. DNR staff were there, 1 shift on Wed, 2 shift on Fri and Sat. Connie Erickson helped on Thursday, directing the parking of trailers to allow for more parking.

There was room for more trailers. Weather a factor, rainy on Friday.

2014 revenue = \$8900

2015 revenue = \$11,000

2016 revenue = \$11,500

911 phone in campground update

Caleb had contacted the state DNR to get quote of cost to run hardwire into camp. He has not heard back. Caleb is going to inquire to his DNR contact again.

April 22, 23 2017 – work day – Pickup trash on trails

Craig has not had any complaints from other users or user groups the last 2 years on the trash pickup weekend. Craig willing to issue a 2 day permit with the condition that no one is on the trails until noon or later. This will allow the turkey hunters to not be disturbed.

Continued next page

ZBE Adopt a Road

ZBE would like to adopt the road from the West Campground out to the Township Road 86. ZBE would pay for and install the sign. The DNR could not think of any issues.

Bat Houses or Martin Houses

Caleb called naturalist – question was – is there a purpose? There should be enough snags and woods to house the bat population. Purpose = mosquito control

Martin House – may take years to get a Martin's to stay. Would need someone to “adopt” the project to maintain the house.

We received the OK to build 2 bat houses. Bat House blue prints were sent to Mark Fitting. Possibly install on the April work day.

Re-designation of Trails Update

Northern part of the state has started. Historically, starts in the north, than goes south. Approximately 2 years to get to the southern Minnesota.

ZB BCH-MN would like to be involved in the planning meetings.

Craig planning on retiring in Sept 2017. He does not know if or when his position will be replaced. Depends on if the legislature gives \$\$.

Trail Expansion to Kruger Park update - (Eagles nest Trail)

Chad brought the information to his supervisor. He has not heard anything back. He has heard of some opposition to the new trail from hunters.

Craig Bloomer – had the GPS route. He has not forwarded the request onto his supervisor. The DNR is in the “maintain what we currently have” frame of mind. ZBE is willing to maintain the trail. Cost to put in the trail is minimal. Craig said he would forward onto his supervisor.

Rescue Points – update - move out of campgrounds

West campground – land is out on lease. Chad will check dates – when lease is done.

Central campground – Chad will do a site visit. Determine a location

Trail Erosion

\$75,000 available (\$25,000 Trail Pass + \$50,000 FRTP) Craig checked the trails last fall with the engineer Tom Richards. This year, work will be done on the west side of the river.

Discussion on adding railroad ties as part of the water break.

May have issues with support vehicles getting over the water breaks.

Upper sand coulee trail needs work, moguls make riding very difficult.. Craig may send his guys there with a skid loader to knock down the moguls. Continued next page

New “You are Here” Trail Signs

Christine Snell, owner of Sign Tech and a ZB member, is willing to create/sell signs at cost. The 12” x 18” signs are made of .063 aluminum covered with the map decal. Approximately \$10 per sign.

ZB BCH-MN willing to donate \$300 to purchase the signs

Signs can be installed on existing wood posts. Installation would be a work day project to install.

Frontenac State Park has had issue with people taking off the “you are here” sticker. So will put a pop rivet as the “you are here”

Trail difficulty designation is up for debate. There is not a standard. All trails on the sign will be the same color.

Craig is OK with this

Harry Dick Memorial High Ties

Dawn Dick would like to donate \$\$ for new high ties on Sand Coulee Road shelter/outhouse/picnic table and at rescue point G. Both locations have been approved by Craig Bloomer.

Chain saw certification

Craig Bloomer needs to have his staff recertified for chain saw usage. He will include any ZB BCH-MN volunteers that would like to take the training.

Timber Sales

ZB west – between Motorcycle trail and Scenic Overlook trail, more logging. Tree harvesting will happen in the winter.

Krueger Park – Logging by American point. Wood will be brought to the top for removal.

Volunteers at work—Walnut Grove



Volunteers at work



Mulch around the trees – Connie Moran



New gravel under High Ties



Tightening cables



Spreading mulch under trees



New fire rings



Installing chicken wire to protect trees from beaver damage



Zumbro Bottoms, located in SE Minnesota, is a special place. This group is about enhancing your equine riding and camping experience at the Zumbro Bottoms Unit of the Richard J Dorer State Forest and protecting this treasure for future generations of equine riders.

Check out our website at - <http://zumbrobottomsbchmn.weebly.com>
 Email: zumbrobottomsequestrians@gmail.com or Barb Partington 651-345-9909

Please join today!!
 Annual dues are \$25.00 individual or \$30.00 per family. Annual dues begin January of each year.

ZB Back Country Horsemen - MN Membership/Renewal

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

Additional donation \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

Phone Number _____

Make Checks Payable to: ZB BCH MN
 Mail to:
 Cindy Fitting
 21535 505th Street
 Plainview, MN 55964

I am interested in helping - NO - YES - I can _____

