

Director's Report

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A lot of water has gone under the proverbial bridge since my last column... I'll try to get you caught up with the comings and goings of BCHW.

First of all and, I believe, most important, is to celebrate the equestrian community's victory in the Eastern District of California U.S. District Court lawsuit brought by the High Sierra Hikers Association that would have enjoined – or banned - the National Park Service from issuing special use permits to equine outfitters serving the Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks wilderness areas. In his decision on May 23rd, the judge reversed his earlier ruling forbidding the issuance of the permits and directed the park service to issue the permits. In his written comments, the judge stated that the Hiker Association was "*arrogant*" in its contention that equines should be banned! So how was BCHW instrumental in making this happen you might ask? Simply this, 2200 members or friends of BCHW responded to an Action Alert and signed an on-line petition that was presented to California's Congressional delegation. That petition spurred those folks to introducing a resolution in Congress that directed the Park Service to extend or reissue permits for up to 3 years. That petition as well as numerous BCHW member contacts prodded our own Congressman Doc Hastings to push the resolution through the House Natural Resources Committee in a single day and got our Senators fully on board to support the Senate version of the resolution. The resolution passed by unanimous votes in both the House and Senate and was signed by the President all within one month's period of time. Absolutely incredible and in my mind had the direct effect on the California District Court judge "seeing the light". So take a minute and pat yourself on the back. Its good to win one of these things for a change instead of seeing yet another area lost to equestrian use.

As you will recall, BCHW has been searching for an Executive Director for some time. Former BCHW President Darrell Wallace had applied and was selected for the job. I am confident he will represent BCHW very well in our continuing struggles with public land management agencies, the Legislature and the whole host of extremist anti-equine advocates that seem to exist for the sole purpose of restricting access and equestrian use of public lands. So, congratulations to Darrell and good luck dealing with all of our detractors.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you who have worked so hard on the various work parties this spring and early summer. I am amazed that we have accomplished so much already this year. I would encourage everyone to go up to the new Wilcox trailhead and check out the brand new picnic tables and fire rings that the Chapter built and installed. At the same time, ride on down the National Scenic Trail and check out the bridge we are building and the other one the Chapter is helping to build in Whistler Canyon. If you have not had the opportunity to help out on those projects there are still projects coming up that could use your help – check out the Chapter website or your copy of this year's "blue book". There is a new twist on work parties this year – we have a gracious hostess, Gail Sunde, who has coordinated potluck dinners following each event and she has coffee, tea and cocoa at the trailheads when the workers return. I for one really appreciate her efforts. Thanks, Gail.

I look forward to seeing you on the trail.