

Gila Chapter

Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico | MINUTES

Meeting date | time 1/11/2017 6:00 PM | Meeting location WNMU Watts Hall

Meeting called by Doug Dexter

Type of meeting Monthly business meeting

Note taker Cindi deCapiteau

Attendees

Joan Bacon, Sharon Brown, Sue Chiverton, Donna Cinti, Cindi deCapiteau, Doug Dexter, Vicki Dowd, Gerry Engel, Jean Hill, Andrea Imler, Dave Imler, Nancy Imler, Russ Imler, Mickey Lemon, Rawlings Lemon, Ted Miles, Lee Perry, Denise Powell, Randy Roth, Becky Shumway, Donna Tillmann, Karla Watson, Nat Williams, Laurie Wlosinski

AGENDA TOPICS

Agenda topic Acknowledgements | Presenter Doug Dexter

Doug extended welcoming words to members we haven't seen in a while, Sue Chiverton and Denise Powell, who joined us this evening. He also welcomed Donna Cinti, a new member who is or education segment presenter for this meeting.

Agenda topic Additions or changes to agenda | Presenter Doug Dexter

There were no additions or changes to either the agenda or the meeting minutes from way back in November. Doug called for a motion to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was made and seconded. The November 2016 minutes were accepted.

Agenda topic Financial & membership report | Presenter Jean Hill

Highlights: Jean Hill reported that the chapter's current satisfying balance would be reduced when state and national dues are paid. Membership numbers are going up as people renew. At the moment, membership consists of 52 members (18 families for 38 people and 14 single souls). See attached report on page 7.

Agenda topic Publicity | Presenter Gerry Engel

The affable Gerry Engel advised that nothing is going on right now, although he hopes that will change in February. Gerry and Rawlings Lemon have been certified by the Forest Service (USFS) as sawyer trainers, so the Gila chapter can now conduct its own sawyer certification, providing greater flexibility with Forest Service scheduling and facilities. Gerry wants to know from all members interested in becoming sawyers—chainsaw and crosscut saw—any dates in February that you CANNOT attend.

The training will probably end up being a two-day event.

Gerry added that anybody who takes sawyer training must have first aid certification (and a card to prove it), which tends to limit the pool of sawyer candidates to the people who took last years' first aid training (which the USFS conducted specifically for us)—you know who you are. He noted that both sawyer and first aid certification is valid for two years, so this year we'll do sawyer training and next year we'll do first aid.

Finally, Gerry advised that since the Forest Service figured out all the necessary procedures for distributing funding from the Southwest New Mexico Resource Allocation Committee (RAC), the USFS has forked over reimbursement checks for last year's trail clearing projects. Gerry gleefully distributed the big bucks to the various recipients.

In response to a question from Donna Tillmann, Gerry advised that there are separate certifications for chainsaw and crosscut saw. GBCH members can go for one of them or both. He added that a member could receive certification for only one end of a crosscut saw . . .

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Advise Gerry of dates you are unavailable in February 2017 to attend sawyer training	Chainsaw and crosscut saw certification candidates	January 31, 2017

Agenda topic *Public Service/Communications* | **Presenter** *Ted Miles*

Ted Miles noted that our press release has been published in one of the Silver City newspapers, but we're not sure which one. The item extolls the Gila chapter's extraordinary feat of clearing over 100 miles of trail in 2016. See the copy on page 8.

A reporter (Robin?) from the Silver City Press contacted Ted and said she wants to accompany us on a trail project. Ted told her that there's no trail activity during the winter, but he'll be in touch as soon as we ramp up for 2017.

The Mid-Valley BCHA chapter (central California) participated in the Rose Bowl Parade.



Agenda topic *Trail lopping support* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

Doug has promised to coordinate with local youth and hiking groups to get brushing support for trail clearing projects. He's waiting for the right time. He has said previously that it's not productive to recruit too early because the volunteers (especially the kids) will wander off, distracted by their smart phones. Moreover, until the 2017 projects are scheduled, there's nothing specific to which volunteers can attach their enthusiasm.

Agenda topic *Education Segment* | **Presenter** *Donna Cinti*

Donna Cinti gave a cheerful presentation, *Hoof Anatomy and Why You Should Care*. Donna had a couple of goals for the presentation:

1. To show how the internal structure of a hoof affect the external structure (and vice versa).
2. To show how the care and uses to which we put our horses affect hoof health and performance.
3. To help us understand and recognize hoof issues and solutions before the issues become serious pathologies that affect the whole horse.

She reviewed the parts of the external and internal hoof, using clear illustrations in a slide program that also showed examples of healthy and not-so-healthy hooves. Perhaps the most revealing part of the presentation was Donna's explanation of how a horse's healthy foot lands (heel first) and why some horses land toe-first (their heels hurt).

Donna is a certified barefoot trimmer. Although she doesn't attempt to persuade anyone that barefoot is better than shod, she does possess solid knowledge of what a healthy hoof is supposed to be like and how to create or

maintain one. She's an asset to Gila chapter members whether we shoe our horses or not. We're lucky to have her among us!

Agenda topic Fun Rides | Presenter Doug Dexter

There's a fun ride coming up on January 28, 2017. Vicki Dowd has scheduled the ride (for GBCH members only) on property near her home in Arenas Valley.

Vicki has plotted out a four-mile loop trail that she uses to condition her horses. The loop offers varied terrain consisting of hills, ditches, and obstacles. Although it is not a difficult trail, it is not for green horses.

After the ride, Mike Dowd will serve lunch.

There's plenty of parking for rigs. If you want more information, contact Vicki directly. You can find her phone number on the GBCH roster, available from Jean Hill.

Please RSVP.

Agenda topic Future education segments | Presenter Doug Dexter

Doug pointed out that Cheryl Roth, the chapter's education Grand Poobah, is doing a terrific job. Ted Miles suggested that another session on horse trailer maintenance would be useful and AAA Trailer's owner is willing to do one for us. Cindi deCapiteau asked if anybody would be interested in a class on the InReach satellite communication device and the suggestion received a favorable response.

If you want to suggest topics that are burning a hole in your knowledge base, contact Cheryl or Doug.

Agenda topic Facebook page | Presenter Cindi deCapiteau

The GBCH Facebook page is attracting attention. Cindi tries to put up amusing and informative posts every couple of days. Take a look.

Agenda topic 2017 NMBCH Rendezvous | Presenter Mickey Lemon

Since the Gila BCH chapter has agreed to host New Mexico's 2017 Rendezvous, planning is underway, guided by the fearless creativity of the committee-in-charge, which is comprised of Doug Dexter, Vicki Dowd, Gerry Engel, Dave Imler, Nancy Imler, Mickey Lemon, and Rawlings Lemon.

Mickey Lemon advised that the first official task is to present the Rendezvous plans to at the state BCH meeting on January 21.

The Rendezvous committee has selected the dates of May 18-21, 2017. The event will be centered at the Gila National Forest's Celebration campsite (see map on page 10). The cost is \$30 per person; this fee covers the Gila chapter's expenses for toilets, food, and miscellaneous costs. All money collected in excess of expenses goes to state BCH treasury.

In addition, the Rendezvous planners will propose a fundraiser for the state treasury. This effort will work as follows (if the state approves of the plan):

- Each chapter donates a \$50 Amazon.com gift card.
- Cards will be raffled off at \$5 per ticket, or \$25 for six tickets.
- When we present the Rendezvous proposal on January 21, we will ask the state BCH and the New Mexico chapters to promote this fundraising activity vigorously so that everybody can buy a ticket.
- We can have the raffle tickets custom printed--300 tickets for \$16.
- Tickets will be distributed at the January 21st meeting.

- The raffle drawing will occur at the Rendezvous.
- Also under consideration for fundraising is a silent auction, using donated items left over from our own Christmas party and items individuals from other chapters contribute.
- The Rendezvous is tentatively planned to begin on Thursday, May 18, at which time participants will sign in and receive nametags. Participants will also receive posters that show the name of the chapter to which they belong so everybody will know where everybody comes from.
- Thursday evening will feature adult beverages, introductions, and snacks.
- Thursday evening could also feature a short education presentation.
- On Friday, May 19 the plan is to conduct group rides, an education segment, and the evening meal.
- For the Friday evening meal, the Gila chapter will furnish grills, condiments, and entertainment. The feasting participants will supply their own comestibles.
- The silent auction will occur on Friday evening.
- For Saturday, May 20, more rides will be offered, as well as an education presentation.
- The Gila chapter will furnish Saturday's evening meal and conduct the raffle drawing.
- The Gila chapter will furnish breakfast on Sunday, May 21.
- Rendezvous participants can go home on Sunday or take advantage of an opportunity to be accompanied up to Woody's or TJ's Corrals for rides in those areas, or to visit the Cliff Dwellings. (Gila chapter members would take out-of-towners up there, since the long and winding road can be intimidating for novices.)
- Ideas for education segments:
 - Dr. Linda Locker's presentation on wilderness veterinary medicine;
 - A packing demo, showing tools;
 - A crosscut saw demo;
 - "Leave No Trace" guidelines;
 - Knot-free packing;
 - Search and Rescue lecture that shows the equipment rescuers carry.
- Pat Buls (currently with the Lower Rio Grande chapter) has offered to recite her cowboy poetry and to provide music.

Suggestions, comments, questions, and answers started rolling in after Mickey finished her report.

- Gerry Engel mentioned that Silver City has a resident who might be interested in doing a falconry demonstration, in which birds go into the field (although there is the likelihood this won't happen since word on the street says that falconers don't fly after March).
- Somebody suggested that we could put on a poker ride.
- Somebody else mentioned those fabulous posters that the Forest Service exhibited at our Christmas party—part of their acknowledgement for our 100-mile trail clearing phenom in 2016. Gerry mused that he has asked the Forest Service for copies and that he needs to contact Lynette again to get the posters placed in town and at the Rendezvous.
- The Forest Service has published off-road vehicle maps in connection with the travel management plan recently adopted. Those maps could be made available to Rendezvous participants.
- The Lower Rio Grande chapter has offered to assist us with logistics and other details of the Rendezvous.
- Doug Dexter asked for a show of hands of people who are willing to attend and/or help out with the event. (Doug seemed satisfied with the response.)
- One vigilant soul in attendance this evening noted that participants would have to supply their own firewood (apparently the Forest Service has a jaundiced view of unauthorized firewood harvesting at the Celebration site).
- If we conduct trail rides up at the Cliff Dwellings, we need a trail boss or two, as well as volunteer drivers and trailers.

- Gila chapter members who come up for day trips (and do not camp) can help out in many ways, so don't let the fact that you're not spending the night deter you from stepping up to handle some task or the other—especially for meals.

Mickey admonished that approval of the Rendezvous plan must be obtained from the state BCH before we begin announcing this bash. If the state doesn't approve the proposed May 18-21 dates, Mickey said she doesn't know what we'll do—have a horse camp, perhaps?

Mickey also reported that about 45 people attended the 2016 Rendezvous (held at Valles Caldera up north), but she believes fewer people will show up down here in the hinterlands. Most of the attendees bring equines and an intention to ride the trails.

There will be a deadline for participants to sign up for the Rendezvous. That date hasn't been set, but the Gila chapter will decide when it will be.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
Contact Lynette about posters	Gerry Engel	

Agenda topic *Equine emergency evac* | **Presenter** *Doug Dexter*

The emergency evacuation communication plan has been expanded to include a broadcast text message, which creates a sense of worry for chapter members who don't have cell service. Doug noted that the call tree is still part of the communication plan and will be activated for those who don't text message.

Agenda topic *Grant County Search and Rescue* | **Presenter** *Laurie Wlosinski*

The Gila chapter has several members who make up the mounted unit of Grant County Search and Rescue (GCSAR). That team experienced ample excitement over Christmas. Laurie reported that two separate hiking groups were stranded when heavy rains drenched Grant County and caused remarkable flooding on the Gila River's middle fork up toward Jordan hot springs (see map on page 11).

The call for rescue first came in to the New Mexico State Police on Friday, December 23, 2016. A physically fit and hiking-savvy member of one of the hiking groups made his way overland, using only his feet and a compass to the Gila Cliff Dwellings Visitors Center, where SAR was activated. The second group of stranded hikers (college students from Louisiana) was reported on Facebook as overdue. Somehow that posting reached the proper authorities, so SAR was activated for Louisiana group as well.

Members of the GCSAR mounted team—Russ Imler, Andrea Imler, Laurie Wlosinski, and Doug Dexter drove up with horses and equipment to the Incident Command site (at Woody's Corral) early on Saturday morning (Christmas Eve). They found Hwy 15 was washed out, but were able to get their rigs past the missing roadbed by driving on what was left of the shoulder. (Laurie observed that as of the time of this evening's meeting, Woody's Corral is closed because the road has sustained further damage and only two or three feet of it now remain).

The team rode into Little Bear Canyon from TJ's Corral and made good progress until they reached the confluence of Little Bear Creek and the Gila Middle Fork, which presents the first significant water crossing on the trail. (To reach the first group required seven crossings; the second group were 10 or 11 crossings up the Middle Fork.) The rescuers navigated the first crossing with some difficulty aboard swimming horses, but made it across the flooded river and regained the trail. At the second crossing, the river bends around a stone cliff face. The rescuers assessed the flood level and decided that if the horses were again required to swim across, they would be swept into the rock wall and ensnared by uprooted trees piled up there. Acknowledging that nobody would benefit from a third set of stranded wet (or possibly drowned) people and their horses, the mounted team called it quits and radioed Incident Command of their decision. Laurie commented that Friday was a long day, but everybody did great and made it back to base safely.

Meanwhile, the Organ Mountains technical rescue team came in from Las Cruces hiked up the Middle Fork from the trailhead near the visitor center for the Heart Bar Wildlife area. The team, whose members are experts in high-water crossings, were swept away at the same second crossing the GCSAR mounted team deigned to wade into. The technical team lost equipment, but not their lives—although the team members themselves now needed evacuation.

Moreover, the stranded hikers were still stranded. Wilderness travel rules exclude mechanical transport, but since SAR couldn't get a rescue team in from the ground, they received special dispensation to allow helicopters to complete the mission—although not until Saturday because it was too late in the day to fly.

On Saturday, a windy and snowy Christmas Day, a couple of GCSAR mounted team members, who spent the night in relative comfort at USFS quarters, hiked back up Little Bear Canyon to install a temporary radio repeater. They waited most of the day with the repeater, keeping an eye on the trail in case some of the hikers managed to get out.

Although the evacuation aircraft had challenges finding a suitable landing site, given the weather and steep cliffs that surround the rescue sites, everybody was eventually choppered out, hypothermic, thirsty, wet, and hungry. GCSAR mounted team members traveled back up four days later to retrieve equipment that the hikers and technical team had to leave behind—and found that the floodwaters were still up to the horses' knees.

These hikers were in serious trouble and would have experienced life-threatening problems had they not been discovered. As things turned out, it was a good save and proof of the integrity of the people who come after us when we do foolish things in nature.

Laurie closed her remarks by announcing that GCSAR will conduct a mock search on February 18, and the mounted team is not only invited, but also encouraged to attend. She will provide details as soon as she gets them.

Action items

Person responsible

Advice GCSAR mounted team members of details about February 18 mock mission.	Laurie Wlosinski
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Agenda topic *Announcements*

Sue Chiverton announced that for the past four or five years she has participated in mountain trail riding clinics. The clinics occur on a closed obstacle course that is perfect for those who want to expand their skills and those of their horses in a safe and fun environment. Contact Sue for more information. (As always, Sue's contact information is available on the chapter roster, which you can get from Jean Hill.

Doug sent out a call for suggestions regarding next year's Christmas party. The consensus is that the Buckhorn Saloon worked well for us in 2016 and that we should go there again in 2017 (providing the management survives its peculiar challenges and the place is still open).

(bank statements available at meeting)

Bank Balance October 16 **\$4,613.30**

Deposits two \$23.07 interest and 50/50

Withdrawals none

Bank Balance November 15 **\$4,636.37**

Deposits four \$1,826.60 interest and 3 xmas-related deposits

Withdrawals two \$ 128.90 cash out for change and reimbursement state meeting mileage

Bank Balance December 15 **\$6,334.07****Transactions after December 15**

Deposits 12/21 \$ 40.00 membership, family

two \$3,607.80 FS reimbursement from RAC for 2016 trail work

Withdrawals none

Bank Balance January 10 **\$9,981.87**

reimburse members for Trail Work \$3,607.87 from RAC grant

Bank Balance January 11 **\$6,374.00** (includes dues to be paid to state/national)

2017 membership At the Christmas Party in December 41 members joined (40 renew 1 new), 16 family and 9 singles. One more family membership was received later in December via USPS, so 43 members, 17 family and 9 singles.

PS – at meeting Jan 11 we got 8 more members, 7 renew and 1 new, 1 Family and 4 singles. At USPS Jan 12 we got another renew of single.

So total is 52 members, 18 families (38) and 14 singles.

2016 membership At end of year we had 69 members, 21 families and 25 singles at end of year.

(Dues for 2017 are same as 2016, \$30 single and \$40 family.)

Christmas Party Summary:

We collected \$490 in checks and \$80 cash for dinners, representing 57 people including guests.

We collected \$870 in checks and \$40 cash for 2017 memberships.

We collected \$84 in cash from our share of the 50/50 raffle.

We collected \$187 in checks and \$275 in cash from the silent auction.

We paid the Buckhorn \$300 in cash from cash collected.

We had \$100 to start for change, and returned \$100 to bank.

Deposits on December 12

Checks (490 + 870 + 187) \$1,547.

Cash (100+120+84+275 minus 300) \$ 279.

Total \$1,826.

Reimbursements for meats: \$65.67



Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen Clear Over 100 Miles of Trail in 2016

The Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen of America (GBCH) located in Silver City, NM recently passed the 100-mile goal for trails maintained or logged out so far in 2016. We cleared many popular trails adjacent to Silver City including the Little Cherry Creek Trail, parts of the Continental Divide trail, the Railroad Canyon Trail, and the Tadpole Ridge Trail. Travel on some of these (Tadpole Ridge, for example) is still tricky because brush (the nefarious thorns of New Mexico locust, for example) impinges on the path, but all trails worked on were at least passable when completed.

Gerry Engel, service project coordinator said, "One of the highlights of this year's season was a six-day pack trip. Eight of the Gila Chapter's members rode 17 miles back into the Woodland Park/Prior Cabin area of the Gila Wilderness. During this trip, armed with only axes and crosscut saws, we cleared almost 70 trees from 15 miles of trail. Back Country Horsemen take great pride in removing fallen trees that block the trail—and the bigger the tree, the happier we are." The GBCH crew pulverized this season's 'trophy tree,' which was about 34 inches in diameter (see photograph), with a crosscut saw. This was a beautiful late spring trip through the open and grassy terrain when the 2016 crop of wildflowers were in bloom. The trail crew had great weather, incredible food prepared by Mickey Lemon and Cheryl Roth, fantastic scenery, and the reverent solitude of the Gila Wilderness. We shared many interesting tales in the evenings around the campfire. Some of the stories were probably even true.

"We left Woodland Park on Memorial Day weekend, when the hikers were heading out for the season's first wilderness forays. We were privately satisfied to see all the people parked at the trail-heads near the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, knowing that those people were experiencing a higher level of enjoyment during their hikes and horseback rides because of the 35 miles of trails we had cleared around that area earlier in the spring."

In 2016, BCH members cleared trails both inside and outside of wilderness, including about 17 miles of the Continental Divide Trail. This year's season started in February. So far, GBCH members have put in about 1100 accident-free volunteer hours cutting or removing over 500 trees from trails and contributing over 160 days of stock use.

The Gila Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen is one of seven Back Country Horsemen chapters in New Mexico. Nationally, Back Country Horsemen of America has chapters in 31 states. The purpose of the Back Country Horsemen of America is:

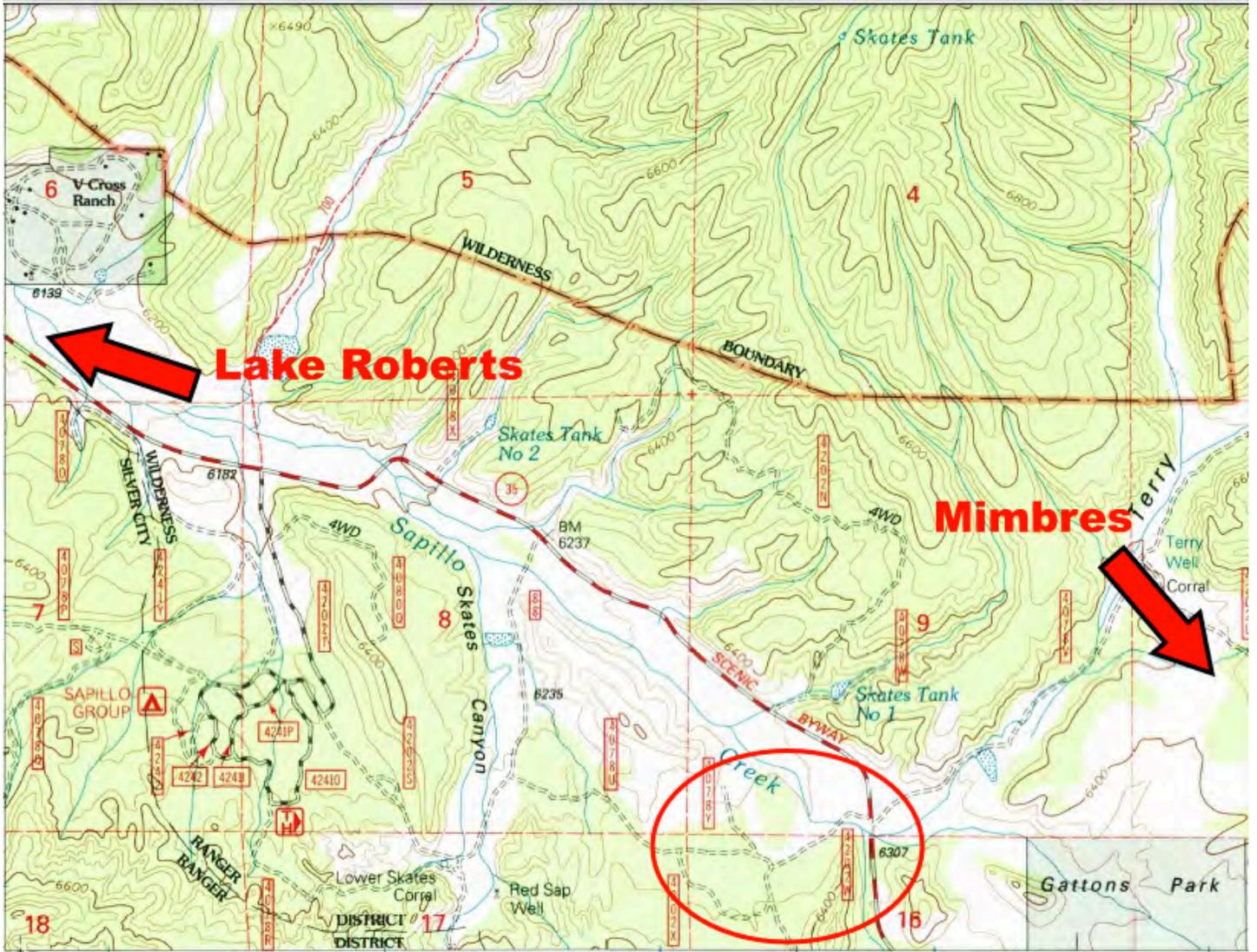
1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's back country and wilderness.
2. To work to ensure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
3. To assist the various government and private agencies in the maintenance and management of said resource.
4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise use of the backcountry resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state Back Country Horsemen's organizations

In assisting with trail maintenance, Back Country Horsemen improve trail recreational opportunities for not only horseman but for hikers, bikers, and others that use trails in public land. Nationally, Back Country Horsemen contribute more than \$12 million annually in volunteer time to keep public land trails open.

As the US economy contracts and budgets for federal agencies are slashed, trail maintenance on public land is being deferred—or abandoned altogether. As a result, there is a huge trail maintenance backlog. Here in the Gila region, as a result of recent fires and floods, trail travel on the Gila forest and wilderness is becoming increasingly difficult. Many individuals and groups volunteer to help keep trails open. These volunteers are becoming more important as time goes on.

The Gila Chapter of the Back Country Horseman of America meets the second Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm at WNMU's Watts Hall. For information call 575-590-3497.

Location of the Celebration campground, proposed site for the 2017 NMBCH Rendezvous



Route to Jordan Hot Springs, Gila Wilderness (source: screen print from map image on MyTopo.com)

