



## **Backcountry Horsemen of California**

### **BCHC Lands Report**

April 16, 2002

#### **BCHC PUBLIC LANDS REPORT TO BCHA FOR 2001**

California is facing significant issues regarding recreational stock use on both federal and state public lands. The Public Lands Committee for the Backcountry Horsemen of California has participated in the following issues during 2001:

- 1. Sierra Nevada Plan Amendment for 11 national forests in the Sierra Nevada Range.** The Record of Decision for the Final EIS was issued and the BCHC filed an appeal in April 2001. Our appeal was based on the impacts to recreational stock use because of the aquatic strategy related trails and recreational stock grazing in meadows and because of the limited operating periods for “species of concern.” The Plan Amendment is under a 12-month review by the new regional forester, Blackwell. We are participating in all public meetings on this additional review.
- 2. John Muir, Ansel Adams and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses Final EIS (3 Wilderness Plan).** The BCHC filed a 23 page Appeal in July 2001. We also filed as an intervener on all other appeals. Vice President for Public Lands, Barbara Ferguson traveled to Washington D.C. in March and April to meet with congressional representatives. The BCHC participated in many meetings to develop a Programmatic Agreement for the 3 Wilderness Plan as required by the National Historic Preservation Act. Our objective was to insure that the “culture” associated with recreational stock use in wilderness areas was recognized and preserved. In July, meet again with Congressional representatives and Regional Forester Powell in Bishop to discuss the Wilderness Plan and the Sierra Nevada Plan Amendment. The Final EIS and the Management Plan Appeals are under review by Region 5. Vice President, Barbara Ferguson and President Toby Horst meet with the reviewing officer at Region 5 Headquarters to present our concerns with the plan. We wanted to express our concerns in person without the “filter” of the Forest Service Staff.
- 3. Existing and New Wilderness Designations.** The Public Lands Committee approved a policy recommendation for existing and new wilderness designations, which was passed by the Board of Directors in March of this year.

We used the points developed by the BCHA Wilderness Committee. Barbara Ferguson and Toby Horst presented our policy statement to Senator Boxer's representative, Mr. Bohigian in March. The latest word from Washington D.C. is that Senator Boxer will introduce new wilderness and wild and scenic river designations legislation on April 23, the day after Earth Day.

4. **Giant Sequoia Monument** – Met with Senator Fienstien in April to discuss the impact of the Monument on local economies and recreation. Local units are participating in the public meetings held to develop the Draft EIS Management Plan for the Monument. The Draft is scheduled for release in May. Several Units are members of the SAMS Coalition, who along with others, have filed suit in Washington D.C. against President Clinton's designation of the Monument. The objective is to reduce the size of the Monument to include only the Giant Sequoia Groves.
5. **Sequoia Kings Canyon National Parks General Management Plan.** Local units are monitoring the development of this plan because the Park proposed an alternative that would eliminate recreational stock use in the Park. The BCHC objective has been to get this alternative removed from any consideration. The plan development has been delayed until the new superintendent is up to speed.
6. **Off Highway Vehicle Stake Holder Meetings.** For the first time the equestrian community has been asked to participate in the development of the new legislation for the green sticker fees collected in California and used for trail maintenance and development. The legislation is scheduled to sunset in 2007. The BCHC is participating as a stakeholder.
7. **Four Southern Forest Plan Amendments.** The Angeles, Los Padres, San Bernardino and Cleveland National Forests are preparing Forest Plan Amendments brought on because of a suit filed by the Southwest Center for Biodiversity. The Draft EIS is expected in September 2002. Our southern units are participating in the process.
8. **California Recreational Trails Plan.** The BCHC submitted comments on the Draft California Recreational Trails Plan in October 2001. Our concern was the elevation of "resource protection" as the primary purpose for the revised trail plan. We commented that California Statutes are clear that the trails plan is specific to the maintenance and development of trails for recreation and that "resource protection" is adequately covered by CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act). Went to the Trails Commission Meeting in January 2002 to reiterate the BCHC position on trails in state public lands.

9. **Fee Demonstration Program.** Reviewed four GAO reports on the Fee Demo Program and sent a letter to all California Forest Supervisors and the Regional Forester reiterating the BCHC opposition to the fee demo program.
10. **RS 2477 Assertions.** Several counties in California have filed an RS 2477 assertion in an effort to protect trails existing prior to 1976 open to the public. BCHC units are spear heading these efforts because they feel these assertions are necessary due to the extensive trail and road closures on federal and state public lands.
11. **Anza Borrego General Plan.** At the request of the Public Lands Committee, the Board of Directors unanimously passed the following resolution regarding equestrian use in the Anza Borrego State Park. “The Backcountry Horsemen of California supports equestrian access to all roads, trails and washes and cross country travel in the Anza Borrego State Park.” This resolution was passed in order to assist the units participating in the planning process for this state park.
12. **MOU California Equestrian Trails and Land Coalition.** The Board approved the Public Lands recommendation that the BCHC proceed with an MOU, which will formally form a coalition of different horse interests. The purpose is to develop large numbers of varied horse groups with a united purpose and voice.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara J. Ferguson  
Vice President, Public Lands  
BCHC