

BCHA NATIONAL MEETING
APRIL 7-10, 2019 ASHEVILLE, NC
REPORT BY JOHN ALLEN

The meeting was held in the Crowne Plaza Hotel. A medium sized facility on the outskirts of Asheville. I found the officers of our organization, as well as other Directors in attendance, to be hospitable, friendly and dedicated to the goals of BCHA. The meetings were very well organized and conducted. The theme of the four days of sessions was “Communication!”

SUNDAY

An orientation meeting was held for those of us who were in attendance for the first time. This session was to equip us so we could participate fully and come away with the maximum information possible. It was very informative.

MONDAY

The main business meeting was held on this day with all directors seated. In addition to the routine hearing and approval of previous meeting minutes and reports (all of which can be seen on the BCHA website), Three other votes were taken. First was to reduce the number of delegates that each state sends to the annual National Directors meeting from two to one. In the discussion, the primary reason for this was related to the cost of travel and lodging. The majority opinion was that the expense was outweighed by the benefit. Also, in the discussion it was noted that if a state opted to only send one, they were free to do so. The proposal was defeated.

Second, a proposal to amend the “National Governing Policies” was put forward by the Executive Committee. The purpose of the changes were to eliminate redundancies and remove language that was no longer needed (pertaining to actions that have already been implemented therefore the instructions for implementation is no longer needed). This was approved.

Third, a proposal designed to help change several Forestry offices, in the north western states, reluctance in using existing Forestry guidelines

to develop plans for reopening numerous trails that were made unusable by natural events. Our chapters in those areas have unsuccessfully tried to make the happen for several years. The proposal would have an official request from the BCHA Executive Committee to the secretary of Forestry to direct the local offices to proceed with the Forestry Department's guidelines to impliment plans for reopening these trails. After discussion and tabling for a day, the proposal passed.

Note: All of the proposals can be found on the BCHA website.

We heard committee reports for the remainder of the day. I especially noted the Membership Committee's recommendations for using Facebook, not only for communicating with our membership, but also to reach potential new members. (for this and all other details I feel are of benefit, I will spell them out at the end of the report under "Postscripts")

The Public Lands Committee reported the creation of sub-committees based on different regions of the country (This answers the question about regions in the state meeting as no other use of regions is happening). The reason for this is so states with similar land use issues can learn from each other as the issues are addressed. Our region is NV, UT, AZ and NM.

The North Carolina Chapter hosted a welcome party at the local AG center. Snack, drinks Bar-B-Que and a live band were provided. A Cowboy Poet even showed up and graced the group with a couple of selections.

I made some individual contacts during these times and have some names and numbers that mat be future resources for our chapters. So ask and I may be able to steer you to someone who can help.

TUESDAY

We had a presentation by the head Forest Ranger of region 8. He explained how the "National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act" pertains to BCHA. His region has been directed to start a pilot program (which is well under way) to put the "act's" provisions and the Forestry Department's directives for implantation into action. All of this is great news for BCHA. The Forestry goal is to "double the amount of volunteer hours and to enlist the input of volunteer groups when developing and implementing each region's Management Plan". They call it

“Shared Stewardship”. (Detail in postscripts)

Next we were introduced to an example of “Collaboration”. A panel, consisting of representatives of BCHA, Bicyclists, Hikers, Rafters and fishermen, all who use trails, was formed a couple of years ago. The idea is, though they may have some differing ideas, keeping the the trails open and maintained were of importance to all. They have had good success working with Region 8 and the local National Park. They present a larger voice than any of the individual groups would have alone. And they have usually worked out conflicts between the groups prior to coming to Forestry. Thus the Forester is not frustrated by hearing conflicting ideas. They were included in region 8’s planing of their management plan. Very successful.

Then we heard from the manager of the local National Forest (Sorry, but I couldn’t pronounce the name, much less spell it). She reinforced the same commitment to implement the 2016 Act and was working with the collaborative panel as well.

It was a real eye opener! To find that the forestry and parks personnel who have been, at times, less than responsive and enthusiastic, have a Congressional Act and a directive from the US Forest Service Washington DC to not only let us be part of the trails planning and maintenance, but they are required to seek out our input!

Wednesday

We broke into various committee meetings in the morning. My first choice was to attend the membership committee since all of our chapters need help in this area, but, all of them did not meet, so I went with Public Lands committee. The main focus of this was to discuss the regions and here from some who had success with the concept. Again our region is: NV,UT,AZ andNM.

In the afternoon, we elected new officers for the Executive Committee. They are:

Darrel Wallace -- Chairman

Sherry Copeland -- Vice Chair

Mark Kimmel -- Treasurer

Latifa Rodriguez -- Director

Brad Pullman -- Non-Director

Dennis Surpa -- Director (elected to finish the last year of

Mark kimmel's term)

The remainder of the day was spent hearing reports from each of the states. There are 31 states represented in BCHA and 28 were in attendance at the meeting.

The Banquet was held that evening followed by a lively auction. The picture donated from Nevada brought (I think) about \$200. All of the auction monies go to finance our several BCHA funds. The gavel was passed to the new Chairman and the annual National BCHA meeting was officially closed.

Thursday

Due to the fact that my flight did not depart until after 8 PM, I was graciously included in a tour of the local Pisgah Forest. The "Birthplace of Forestry in the USA" The first forestry school was started there in the 1880's. Today there is a nice museum and all of the original buildings are preserved along a pleasant trails. Add a beautiful water fall and it was a nice tour.

All of my flights were bumpy with turbulence but otherwise, uneventful. And the Atlanta airport was not as difficult to negotiate as I was led to believe.

POST SCRIPTS

Here are some details that I thought may be useful.

Grants: How to find grant money and how to apply. Contact: Yvette Rollins 812-797-4540

Youth Membership: There is no plan in place to include high school age or younger youth in BCHA currently. They looked at existing groups (BSA,4H, FFA) but found no way to make an affiliation on a national level. Local chapters can sponsor a group, but they would be taking on that groups requirements and curriculum. There is a desire among the national leaders to come up with something, so they are looking for suggestions. But any action will be at some future date.

Dues: This is based on a conversation with the BCHA treasurer.

Each chapter may devise how to collect dues. And even though the dues are submitted to the state and national once, annually, the chapter may add members to the national's roster without a payment at any time during the year. Organizational supporters (businesses and non-profits) may be obtained as long as the support agreements are specific to each chapter and not to BCHA nationally.

Facebook: (I'm not sure of what it all means or how to do it, but here it is) 1. An APP for page managers for smart phones is available.

2. Members can use "go fund me" to raise money for the local chapters.

3. Advertisements on facebook are available and can be targeted to an audience.

4. Use as many pages as possible to invite people to attend events meetings, clinics, etc.

5. Create interaction, ask questions, do contests (photo?)

6. Make sure that posts are made well in advance of an event.

7. Incorporate multiple reminders.

8. Utilize "boosting" and "Targeting"

Be intentional with a goal in mind. Never sacrifice quality for quantity.

Forestry and National Parks: Here are some things to ask about at your local office.

1. Does your local office have a "Volunteer Co-coordinator"?

2. (After looking up their management plan and finding things that will benefit BCHA) go and ask to help make those things happen. They said that most of the field offices don't know what is in their own local management plan that they are supposed to be following.

3. In a friendly way, make sure they know about the 2016 Act and their superior's directive to implement it.

Remember, "Shared Stewardship" is their term and "Collaboration" strengthens our influence.

