



Portneuf River Back Country Horsemen try out the new trail built by boy scout Nate Payne and his friends at the top of McKee Creek near South Putnam Mountain.

The Portneuf River Back Country Horsemen is hosting an auction and dinner Thursday, February 20th at 6:30 PM in the Pocatello Senior Activity Center.

There will be no charge for food. We are hoping to sign up new members for our chapter. Persons that do not own a horse may also become a member if they wish to participate in educational activities and service projects.

We are a non-profit organization that is committed to protecting the access of equestrians to public lands. We love to ride and explore new trails. We assist with trail maintenance and improvement projects, keeping trails clear for all user groups. We welcome riders of all types, ages and interests into our chapter.

A chainsaw certification class is planned for this April. Anyone that cuts logs on national forest trails as a volunteer for the forest service must be certified. It is better to work on trails with an approved and recognized group than on your own. Our certified sawyers are covered by the federal government for tort claims and work-related injuries.

Funds raised from this auction will be used to repair local trails on Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Every year the Portneuf River Back country horsemen has worked on projects surrounding Pocatello. Last year, we wanted to repair

three local trails, but we just didn't have enough members to do the work. To solve the manpower problem, we recruited five boy scouts to plan their Eagle Projects on those trails. The Portneuf River Back Country Horsemen initiated and supervised the work, supplied pack animals, purchased tools and supplies, and provided a certified person to saw logs. The scouts recruited people to help them finish their project so that in the end we accumulated a total of 1,364 service hours.

We will probably focus our work in 2020 in two areas near town. The first is southeast, centered around the Mink Creek Road and Scout Mountain. The second area is around the Portneuf Range of mountains from McCammon north to the reservation. This year we may not be able to find scouts needing eagle projects. That is why we are looking for more individuals who love to hike, backpack, run, or bicycle local trails and would like to give something back.

Most people may have heard about the funding woes of the U.S. Forest Service secondary to fighting wildfires. However, the funding of our forests was falling long before the recent fires. Now many trails have simply vanished. There is more than 10,000 miles of non-motorized trails left in Idaho but only 30% of those remaining are up to federal standards.

More and more, forest trails are being maintained by state agencies and the public sector. Examples of state contributors are the Idaho State Department of Parks and Recreation and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Example of the public sector are the Back Country Horsemen, the Idaho Trails Association, and the Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation. Contributions from these sources in 2018 accounted for 49% of all the trail miles that were maintained in Idaho. The federal government would like to turn even more of the maintenance of national forests over to the public. The National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act was signed into law in late 2016. The purpose of the act was to significantly increase the role of volunteers and partners in trail maintenance.

Here is how to get in contact with us; Join us for Dinner and Auction, visit our website at portneufriverbch.com (a short link is prbch.org) or our Facebook page Portneuf River Back Country Horsemen, or call our president Steve Hurley at 221-4626.. Volunteers can also sign up for a trail project with us on the justserve.org website.