



Title: Arkansas Equestrians Achieve Milestone in Trail Preservation Efforts
By Rhonda Kelly-Duncan & Pam Floyd

In a transformative journey characterized by resilience and determination, the Backcountry Horsemen of Arkansas have turned the impossible into the “I’mpossible.” Overcoming obstacles and pushing themselves, they recently achieved a significant milestone by completing comprehensive US Forest Service (USFS) standard sawyer training at Devils Den State Park. This collaborative effort, uniting all four chapters, signifies a historic moment for equestrians in the state, highlighting their unwavering commitment to trail preservation.

The road to mastery was not without its challenges. Certification was a requirement to utilize saws on USFS and National Park Service (NPS) lands where Backcountry members work tirelessly to maintain trails. For years, efforts to find a suitable certification class proved elusive. However, two members of the group studied under USFS professionals and became instructors themselves.

Participants were first required to undergo CPR training prior to their chainsaw certifications to ensure they possessed essential life-saving skills, as well as each participant having their own chainsaw equipment and PPE, which is quite an expense.



This year’s 2024 certification training was led by retired professor and equine enthusiast Henry Crouch, Arkansas Chainsaw Coordinator Larkin Floyd, and Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Arkansas President Jim Center. The chainsaw training, which commenced with an intensive classroom seminar, prioritized safety and preparedness. Additionally, the hands-on, in-the-field portion of the class further honed their skills.

The certification process culminated in a supportive atmosphere, with guest speakers including USFS Officer Kirk Vermillion, Superintendent Tim Scott, and Park Interpreter Cara Helton providing valuable insights and encouragement. The event benefited greatly from the warm acknowledgment of our fabulous cooks, Max and Jacci Ryan, who provided a nourishing meal featuring Max’s renowned chili and Texas cornbread, as well as Lynne Patterson, who provided homemade soup. Their contributions certainly enhanced the class experience.

Ranger Allen Smith provided the final sign-off. With assistance from Roy Eatep and Patrick Scott, the Backcountry Horsemen of Arkansas proudly announced the certification of Class A, B, and C sawyers, highlighting their determination and perseverance. The newly certified Class A and B sawyers, including Chuck and Carol Bitting, Donna Blake, Mary Cole, Rhonda Kelly-Duncan, Pam Floyd, Gary Gerber, Betty Van Houten, Rhonda Keeter, Michael McGee, Robert Willett, Bonnie Sheppard, Dan Greasy with Ozark highland trails, all embody the spirit of stewardship and excellence. With all four Arkansas chapters of the Backcountry Horsemen of America—Buffalo River, Ozark, Sylamore, and Northwest Arkansas—united, Arkansas equestrians are poised to confront future challenges and protect the natural beauty of their trails. As these newly certified sawyers embark on their next chapter, they serve as an inspiration to others, demonstrating how dedication and courage can transform the impossible into the “I’mpossible.”



<https://www.bcha.org/>
Website

<https://arkansasbch.org/>
Website

<http://www.bchnwa.net>
Website

National

State

NWA