

Here is an article that appeared on page A3 of The Spectrum on Sunday, February 2nd..... (2 pictures are omitted)

In a message dated 2/5/2008 9:27:05 A.M. Mountain Standard Time, [avandeusen@smgpo.gannett.com](mailto:avandeusen@smgpo.gannett.com) writes:

## **Horsemen work together to preserve our trails**

By ALYSON VAN DEUSEN

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WASHINGTON CITY - The Back Country Horsemen of Utah is more than just a group with a common interest.

The Southwest Chapter, 65 strong, is dedicated to keeping the region's trails open to horses, said Freddy Dunn, chapter president.

Riding in nature is a privilege that was once taken for granted but is now in jeopardy as Southern Utah's open space becomes housing developments and shopping plazas.

Other factors can close a trail to riders, like trail reclassification, Dunn said.

If a trail is only groomed six feet vertically, it may be usable for hikers, but not riders, she said.

The group works in conjunction with the Forest Service, said member Crystal Phillips.

"We work hard to keep our trails open to ride," she said.

Dexter Rees, former chapter president, said he lives in Bloomington Hills and herds cattle along the Arizona Strip.

Rees said he used to ride from his home to the Arizona border.

"But now, it's all being developed," Rees said. "There's 'no trespassing' signs all over. We have to trailer out of Bloomington to go riding."

Rees wasn't complaining, just stating the facts.

But compared to many other states, Utah is lucky to have as much open land as it does, Dunn said.

"We haven't had the trail closure issues of Montana, California or Washington, but it's just a matter of time," she said.

The Back Country Horseman of America have a Right to Ride bill before Congress to guarantee historical trails will always grant access to horses, Dunn said.

The group works to maintain trails by picking up trash and encouraging other wilderness users to follow the area's guidelines.

The Back Country Horsemen of Utah's Southwest Chapter also helps with larger service projects for Zion National Park and Snow Canyon State Park.

But the organization isn't all work. It's also about having fun.

Rees, along with his 11-year-old grandson and 24 other Back Country Horseman members, rode their horses along a red dirt trail in the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve late Saturday morning.

The group meets for a ride the first Saturday of each month, Dunn said.

Riders began parking their trucks and trailers by the trail head in Washington City before 10 a.m. to tend to their horses.

Dunn brought a Dutch oven breakfast of meat, red potatoes and cheese.

"Chow's on," she yelled when breakfast was ready.

Pat Dalpiaz, of St. George, was also there to ride her black horse, Fancy.

Dalpiaz said riding gives her a rush she can't find anywhere else.

She said she also enjoys the people, who she describes as "down to Earth."

"You get to be with nature, and it's always an experience," she said.

The organization has 16,000 members in 23 state chapters, Dunn said.