The Sierra Freepackers unit of The Back Country Horsemen of California (BCHCSFP) is a small, but committed unit of volunteers. Currently we are 50 members strong. Despite our moderate size The Sierra Freepackers consistently ranks among the highest per capita for volunteer hours in trail maintenance, public awareness and education. Five members hold USDA, cross cut saw certification, and five members are chain saw certified. Four members are Wilderness Riders, this program partners with the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Wilderness Riders are trained stock users committed to the training and educating of others in the value of wild lands and the importance of Gentle Use / Leave No Trace Skills. BCHCSFP unit members have numerous years of trail conservation, past grant and project completion experience. In 2016 alone we logged 2,281 hours in the Sierra National Forest.

Our local stewardship projects include but are not limited to the following areas:

Kelty Meadows Horse Campground, Willow Creek and surrounding trail network

The project goal was to restore and mitigate cattle and riding stock impact to riparian habitat along Willow Creek, improve meadow hydrologic conditions at Kelty Meadows and upgrade the Kelty Meadows Campground infrastructure. Beginning 8/2012 and completed in 12/2013, in conjunction with Bass Lake Ranger district (SNF) the BCHCSFP completed the following: 350 feet of denuded stream banks were replanted with native sod and willow and one-rock grade control structures were built. A permanent buck and pole enclosure fence was constructed to protect the creek restoration. An off-site water trough and solar water pump was installed to provide water for cattle and stock users. A few of the resulting benefits are increased annual water availability and quality to riparian-aquatic dependent systems, wildlife, and livestock. In Kelty Meadows Campground improvements were made to infrastructure and campground safety by the installation of bear boxes and tie rails at 13 campsites. Our stewardship of Kelty Meadows is ongoing. In 2016 we worked over 15.7 miles of adjoining trails, removed 5 trees and trimmed trails. We continue to maintain the solar water pump and 253 gallon water trough.

2016 - Local trails, camping, parks and recreation areas maintained:

Granite Creek Horse Campground and adjoining trails – Annually, the BCHCSFP sets up pipe corrals for public use during summer and takes them down for storage at end of season (*We built some new hitching rails last year 2017 but we don't remove the hitching rails*). We also assist in trail maintenance in the Granite Creek Area. In 2016 our week long work party covered over 10 miles of wilderness trail and 26.6 trail miles were cleared of 23 trees and white thorn. Trails included *Soldier Meadow* to *Clover Meadow, Isberg, Norris Cutoff, Fernandez* and the *Chetwood Cabin trail* to Cora Lake.

Bass Lake - 4 miles of trail were trimmed and 1 large was tree removed.

French Trail - 4 miles of trail were recovered and trimmed, 8 trees were removed and 10 trail signs were reinstalled after recent fires and logging due to tree mortality.

Snow Play Area - Trash clean-up and removal, 7 trees were removed and 15 miles of trail was trimmed.

Hensley Lake and Eastman Lakes - In association with US Army Corps of Engineers the BCHCSF assists with removal of illegal bike jumps, downed trees, trash removal and trail repairs.

San Joaquin River Gorge Special Recreation Management Area - In association with the Bureau of Land Management, BCHCSF assists with the removal downed trees, trash removal and trail repairs.

Ahawhnee Hills Regional Park the BCHCSFP has established new trails equestrian trails in the park. In 2016, BCHCSFP developed and tagged 4 miles of new trail. These newly established trails are open to hikers and equestrians alike