



# Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation 2024 Packer Apprenticeship Position Announcement

## About the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation

The Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation (BMWF) has worked in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service and local Backcountry Horsemen chapters for 26 proud years to organize and lead conservation projects that maintain trails and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife in the BMWC. Each year 200 to 300 BMWF volunteers, ages 12 to 80, participate in over 50 projects on trails and land in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and surrounding wild lands. Since its incorporation in 1996, the BMWF and its volunteers have cleared over 5,000 miles of trail and have donated millions of dollars of labor to improve public lands.

## The Importance of Pack Support

Volunteer pack support is an integral part of the work BMWF does. Pack stock haul tools, food and gear for over 50 backcountry projects each year. Without this non-motorized support, volunteer based stewardship would not be possible. In addition, packers help educate volunteers about the importance of traditional stock use. The Bob has a uniquely rich heritage of stock use, which has helped to shape the character of the Complex and its users, as well as support its conservation and stewardship. However, despite this deeply ingrained heritage, packing is a fading skill. The current generation of packers is aging, and there are few young packers being trained to replace them. The BMWF with Back Country Horsemen of the Flathead (BCHF) and Backcountry Horsemen of America (BCHA) have established a packer apprentice program designed to help foster the next generation of packers, who we hope will help support wilderness stewardship in The Bob for years to come.

## Apprenticeship Description

Each apprentice will gain valuable skills and training in Wilderness packing. The apprentice will attend a packing skills class at the Nine Mile Wildlands Training Center taught by legendary packer Smoke Elser and Casey Burns. Topics covered in this five day course include: stock anatomy, saddles and tack, feeding and care of stock, safe stock handling techniques, packing the Decker saddle, and minimum impact camping and stock use techniques. Following training the packer apprentice will be required to participate in a minimum of 6, one way packing trips with the BMWF Master Packers. These experienced packers will provide training in stock safety, packing different loads on different animals using different styles of packing, safely on the trail, wilderness skills and much more.

## Preferred Skills & Background

- Knowledge of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.
- Minimal experience working with and around stock.
- Wilderness travel skills.
- Ability to perform heavy lifting and labor
- A demonstrated interest in traditional skills
- Attention to detail
- Safety oriented



## Transportation

For this position, a reliable, personal vehicle is required to access job site locations. This often requires driving to trailheads on backcountry, gravel or dirt roads

## Salary and Benefits

This position is a non-salaried apprenticeship. However there are some significant benefits. They include:

- \$100 travel allowance per pack trip, not to exceed \$525 for the summer
- \$15/day meal allowance while at the 9 Mile packing clinic and \$100 travel allowance
- \$400 lodging reimbursement during training
- Cost of the packing clinic (a \$650 value)
- Valuable skill building & career building opportunities
- Use of riding stock while working with packers
- One on one lessons from three of the most respected packers in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex.

## Position Length

This is a part-time apprenticeship—it is assumed that the apprentice will likely have other summer employment as well. Apprentices will need to commit to attend the first day of BMWF Orientation the last week in May (exact date TBD), a weeklong packing clinic at 9 Mile Wildlands Training Center in June, and commit to help on a minimum of 6 one-day packing trips with trainer packers, to be chosen from BMWF's established trip schedule. It will be your responsibility to find the dates that work for you and the trainers.

## To Apply

Email a resume, cover letter and answers to supplemental questions to Ian Bartling, Field Coordinator, at [ian@bmf.org](mailto:ian@bmf.org). Also, be sure to review the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation website for a better understanding of the organization [www.bmf.org](http://www.bmf.org). Please feel free to contact us at 406-387-3808 with any questions. Application closes February 1<sup>st</sup>. Applicants will be contacted for interviews soon after.

## Supplemental Questions

*Please limit responses to one page to two paragraphs each.*

- 1) What inspires you about wild country and traditional skills?
- 2) What role do you see the packer apprentice program playing in your future plans and goals?
- 3) Please answer the following scenario question.
  - You are pulling a string of 5 mules down a Wilderness trail. You come up to a creek crossing and see that a group of 3-4 backpackers and a dog are sitting along the creek and trail, packs off and changing shoes to cross the creek. What are your initial thoughts/concerns when meeting these people? How do you proceed?

