

BACKCOUNTRY JOURNAL



THE MAGAZINE OF BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS SUMMER 2022



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COMMUNITY

It's not necessarily the things we do; it's who we do them with. Sure, our access and conservation efforts were the impetus for our organization's formation. They continue to drive us today. But since the first campfire, BHA has been about the people – individuals who not only make the work happen but who have fun while doing it.

Rendezvous epitomizes this sentiment. It's a gathering like no other that stokes the fire and fills the bucket. The conversations that were experienced, bonds that were forged, and plotting and scheming that happened into the wee hours lie at the heart of who we are. Thank you to those who joined us in Montana for a memorable event.

So many moments stand out.

The Field to Table Dinner was hosted at the Teller Wildlife Refuge south of Missoula. Our chefs prepared amazing appetizers, entrées and desserts. Jamie Carlson and crew mixed up killer beverages. And thanks to the generosity of Ray Penny at G&H Decoys, we nearly doubled from last year the funds raised. Huge thanks to Randy King, Jaime Teigen, Shannon Waters, Adam Steele, Nathan Parrish, Justin Townsend, Riley Egan, Zoey Osborne and Hannah Nikonow ... the food was out of sight! To the college kids who helped serve and the volunteer chefs: I salute you. We couldn't have pulled it off without you!

Cheers to my camping mates Seth Trokey, Tim Brehmer and Drew Kazenski. It was great to hold down the southeast corner of Camp 1 again. Keenan Adams, you were missed, but your praises were sung. Eddie Nickens: You once again braved sharing my Seek Outside teepee with me ... oh, the stories you could tell.

We hosted the largest-ever gathering of BHA corporate partners in support of public lands, public waters and public wildlife at this year's Rendezvous. Thank you! Not only did you weather the wind, but you all jumped into action as tents attempted to blow away, aiding your fellow vendors. Tasty sausage from Walton's and cocktails from Vortex were definite crowd pleasers. Having DeMarcus sign my fishing regulations – he starred on the cover – was super rad.

The Backcountry Brewfest returned to great fanfare as we welcomed Missoulians to join us on the banks of the Clark Fork River. BHA Operations Director Frankie McBurney Olson summed it up in one word: "Insane!" Thanks to the volunteers who stepped up and helped pour beer. Later that night we walked to the historic Wilma theater and were wowed by one of the finest lineups of storytellers ever assembled. Tyson Running Wolf, Brandon Dale, Zsakee Lewis, Mark Kenyon, David Wise, Clay Hayes, Trevor Hubbs and Rue Mapp ... thank you for an inspiring evening. For those who couldn't make it: This year's Campfire Stories will soon be up on the BHA YouTube channel for your viewing pleasure.

Celebrating our community on Saturday was a highlight. While we could and should give out more accolades, our award



No doubt, memories were made Saturday night at the bonfire.
Photo by Aaron Agosto

winners were deserving and had inspiring words for the rest of us. Minnesota dominated the hardware, including a repeat win by father-son duo Greg Kvale and Pete Kvale in the Wild Game Cookoff. The Minnesota flag paraded around the late-night bonfire will be etched in my mind forever.

I'll leave you with one of my fondest memories ... no, not giving North American Board Chair Ted Koch a haircut for conservation ... though that was definitely up there. Instead, it was a relatively quiet moment that happened by chance. In a cataclysmic meeting of the brain trust of BHA at the Saturday evening bonfire, former longtime North American board member David Lien, the most recent Aldo Leopold winners Jared Oakleaf and Liz Lynch, and I were reminiscing when Stevens Point College Club Chair Harrison Stasik joined us. In that moment we spanned the first Rendezvous in Missoula to our most current. We had our sage wisdom and youthful exuberance on full display. We had the heart of BHA in our hands with the glow of the fire on our faces.

These and other moments are what this gathering of our community is all about. For those who couldn't make it this year: We missed you. For those who came: Thank you for being who you are.

Mark your calendars now for North American Rendezvous 2023 ... March 16-18. We'll be back in Missoula but at a new venue ... the Missoula County Fairgrounds. On-site camping options will still be available, and for our vendors in particular ... we will be offering an awesome indoor space.

Let us all continue to spread the good word on public lands, public waters and public wildlife. Together, our growing community will carry the day, one fire at a time.

Onward and upward,

Land Tawney
President and CEO



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– HERMAN MELVILLE, MOBY DICK

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Cover Photo: Black houndsmen have a storied tradition in the South. Read "Fathers and Sons and Swampers" by Jonathan Wilkins on page 54. Photo by Marianne Nolley.

Above Image: Elliot Elisara, Boundary Waters, Minnesota,
2021 Public Lands and Waters Photo Contest

Raven Aäe, Andrew Amen, Beau Badon, Jack Ballard, Thomas Baumeister, Amber Casey, Pat Casey, M. Robbins Church, Cooper Ferko, Michael Garrigan, William Griffith, Bert Lindler, Daniel Majerus, Dudley McGarity, Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley, Marianne Nolley, Rory O'Hanrahan, Rachel Owen, Erik Petersen, Ron Rohrbaugh, Lt. Col. Andrew Ruskiewicz, Wade Truong, Barry Whitehill, Jonathan Wilkins

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Backcountry Journal is the quarterly membership publication of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, a North American conservation nonprofit 501(c)(3) with chapters in 48 states and the District of Columbia, two Canadian provinces and one Canadian territory. Become part of the voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife. Join us at backcountryhunters.org

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Pennsylvania Backcountry Resurrection

BY MICHAEL GARRIGAN

The sun has yet to reach me back in this hollow. The sound of diesel trucks braking down the mountain has long since been replaced with warbler chatter and the susurrus of the stream carving its way through thick rhododendron and knotweed.

I've hiked a few miles up an abandoned rail line that once smoked out these woods as it cut through, burdened with logs. I'm here to see the headwaters of this tributary, to see how long the orange lasts, to see where the old water begins. I pass rusted out mining machinery and brick culm piles slowly decomposing into new soil, melding the industrial past of the Pennsylvania woods with native and invasive flora.

I find the elders of these woods, the survivors – brown and brook trout that dart under schist ledges when they see my shadow. This stream empties into another, as streams do, but the main stem is burnt orange with acid mine drainage. Decades ago it was dead, just a wild run of sulfuric acid and iron oxide – the result of decades of anthracite mines and resource extraction. Now, it's undergoing a rewilding.

The brook trout are natives that held on tight to the headwaters. The brown trout have become wild, stream-bred descendants of stocked trout; somehow they figured out a way to live in both waters, moving up and down freely from the polluted main stem to its resilient source.

Sure, I'm fishing, but mostly I'm exploring, tracing the outlines

of the naked anthracite ridges and looking for rusted artifacts of the mines and logging operations that defined this watershed for decades, trying to map out this post-industrial wild. It's cold, so I stop and build a little fire to warm up while I listen to plunge pool psalms.

Pennsylvania is home to almost 3.8 million acres of state parks, forests and game lands. It's also home to all 514,000 acres of the Allegheny National Forest. Within those four-plus-million acres of public land, there are countless wild areas and rivers where "development or disturbance of permanent nature will be prohibited, thereby preserving the wild character of the area." But one does not need to go to these specific wild areas to get lost in the Pennsylvania public lands backcountry. Follow any of the countless trails (some of the more famous ones are the Mid State Trail and the Black Forest Trail), gravel roads or dirt tracks and you'll eventually find yourself where there are more ravines than roads, more elk than people, more trout and thistle than trucks and Sheetz convenience stores.

The Pennsylvania public lands are truly multifaceted and easy to get lost in. Biking, hiking, hunting, fishing – no matter where you live in the state, you are no more than an hour or two away from some sort of public land large enough to explore the backcountry. Many people bypass this state on their way out west or north to the big-name places where the mountains are taller, the peaks more pronounced and the wildernesses more defined. They can't get past the fact that much of the public land in Pennsylva-



nia was once logged, mined or used in some way for resource extraction. It's post-industrial wilderness.

However, even in that rusty decay, even in those backcountry places cut through with a pipeline or fractured by a fracking pad, there is a wilderness that affords anyone the chance to lose themselves in pursuit of trout, deer, turkey, elk and bear.

For example, take the Quehanna Wild Area and its nearly 50,000 acres of protected state forests and game lands open to hunting and fishing. This plateau along the Allegheny Front is home to wild trout streams, a minimum-security boot camp, miles of backpacking trails, a decommissioned nuclear reactor, a jet-engine testing facility, reintroduced elk and one of the largest stands of white birch in the eastern United States. It was once surrounded by a fence to keep the tested jet engines from flying out of range. Now it's one of the biggest wild areas in the state with endless amounts of backcountry hunting and angling to explore. Some of the streams still suffer from acid mine drainage, but thanks to efforts from conservation groups, trout are returning to these



EACH STREAM STARTS SOMEWHERE. EACH PIECE OF WILDERNESS BEGINS AS A SEED. THIS IS MY PENNSYLVANIA BACKCOUNTRY – TATTERED AND SCARRED, SACRED AND WILD.

of wilderness begins as a seed. This is my Pennsylvania backcountry – tattered and scarred, sacred and wild. With us, it will grow into a new ecosystem to enjoy and protect. Without us, it's just diesel trucks and bulldozers. 🐾

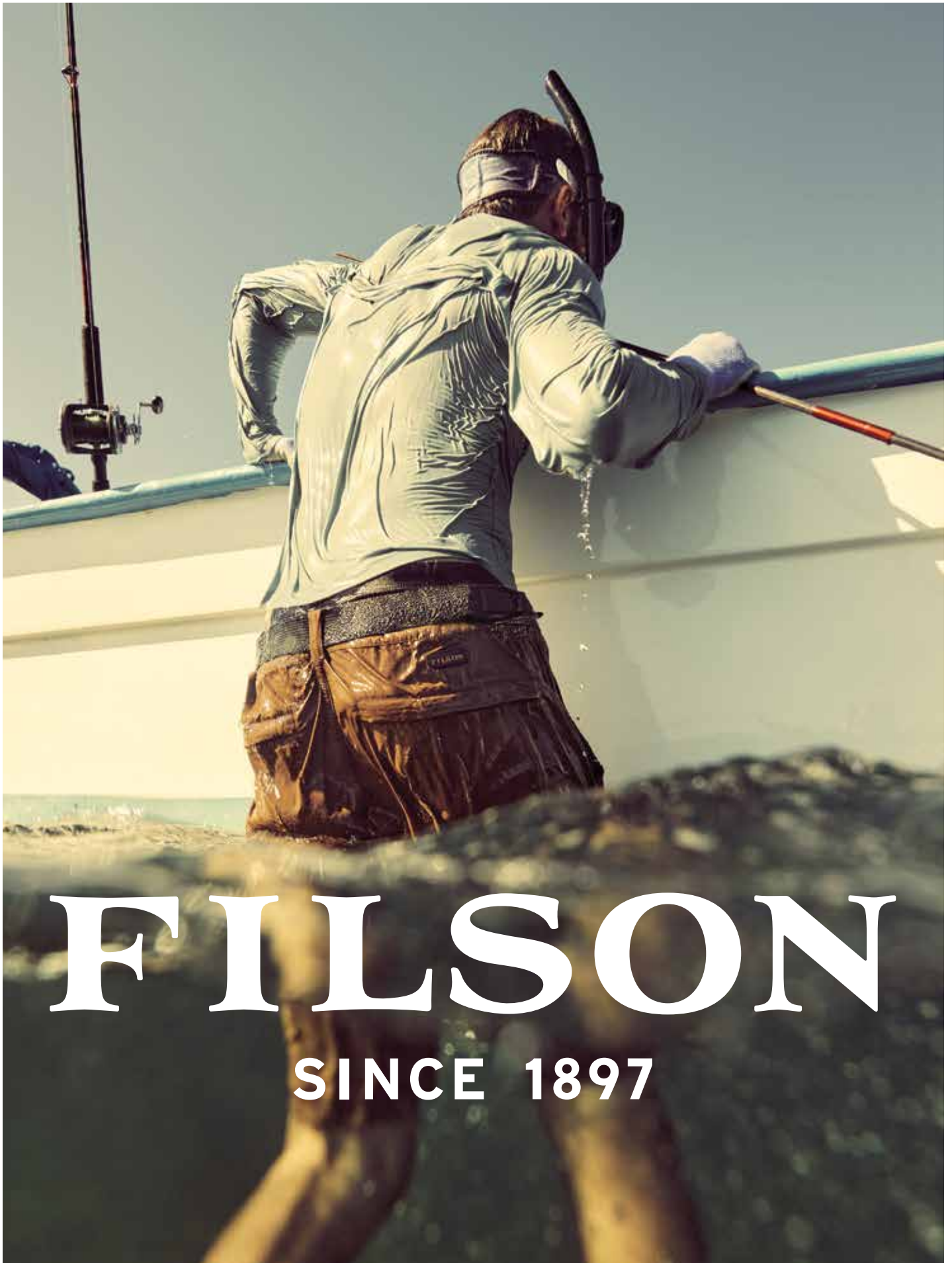
BHA member Michael Garrigan writes and teaches along the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. He is the author of the poetry collection "Robbing the Pillars" and was an artist in residence for The Bob Marshall Wilderness Area in 2021.

watersheds.

Once the fire burns down, I follow the river back downstream, swinging a black woolly bugger as I go. Trout give reckless chase – easy food in this water that only hatches midges – through the orange slurry until their desire catches up with their prey, and I easily release them.

Sculpins and central stonerollers are the meals that feed this particular resurrection. Each stream starts somewhere. Each piece

Photos: Michael Garrigan



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BHA AND CONSERVATION PARTNERS CELEBRATE BIG POLICY WINS

MAPLand Act

This spring both the House of Representatives and the Senate took action to pass the Modernizing Access to Our Public (MAP) Land Act into law with overwhelming levels of support – a vote of 414-9 in the House and unanimous support in the Senate. The MAPLand Act will fund public land management agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers, to standardize, compile and release digital map records to the public.

This publicly available information will include the open or closed status of roads and trails on public lands, vehicle-use regulations and boundary details among others. With tens of thousands of paper records held in these agencies' filing cabinets, the increased opportunity for the public to use them digitally is tremendous. Currently, more than 16.4 million acres of U.S. public lands are landlocked – surrounded by private lands – and inaccessible. Information made available through the MAPLand Act will allow hunters and anglers to discover new opportunities on public lands and waters.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act

In April, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works voted to report Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) to the full Senate with a strong bipartisan vote of 15-5 in a committee with evenly divided partisanship. This legislation continues to move forward with significant momentum in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, after its bipartisan committee vote in the House Committee on Natural Resources earlier this year. RAWA would create nearly \$1.4

billion in annual, dedicated funding for state and tribal wildlife management agencies. In doing so, it would provide critical support for conservation work, enhancing fish and wildlife habitat and boosting America's outdoor recreation economy. The management of at-risk species under science-based wildlife action plans is beneficial for all fish and wildlife, including game species. Now both chambers of Congress must take up this legislation on the floor and pass it with haste.

New Mexico Stream Access

The New Mexico Supreme Court recently issued a ruling strongly in support of public access to the state's waters, when it unanimously struck down a regulation allowing landowners to close access to streams running through their properties.

The BHA's New Mexico chapter, along with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and the Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, filed suit in 2020 asking the court to nullify the regulation as unconstitutional. In March, the court agreed. The decision not only strikes the so-called Non-Navigability Rule from the books; it also voids closures on five New Mexico streams adopted previously.

"This decision by the state Supreme Court is great news for anglers, boaters and others who use our public waters in New Mexico, but it shouldn't come as a surprise," said BHA's New Mexico Chapter Policy Chair Joel Gay. "In 1945 the Supreme Court said the same thing – that these waters throughout the state are everyone's to enjoy for recreational use. We don't know how that constitutional right got lost, but for decades we have been told otherwise. Our chapter thanks the state Supreme Court for setting the record straight – again."

LATEST ON THE PODCAST & BLAST



In Episode 127, Hal sits down with Florida Gulf Coast writer, naturalist and advocate Jack Rudloe. Jack is one of the orneriest watermen on the Florida Gulf Coast, a time- and sun-honed fighter for clean water, intact forests and wetlands, and the myriad salt and freshwater life that depends upon it all. He is a world-renowned scientist and researcher, a commercial harvester of sea life, an unparalleled educator

and the author of nine books and hundreds of articles.

The Bankhead National Forest in Alabama is an island of rare plants and wildlife and old growth trees in a state where coalmining and industrial forestry and now the sprawl of cities have radically altered the landscape. **In episode 129,** come with us to Moulton, Alabama, and meet native son **Joseph Jenkins,** a biologist and herpetologist, hunter and angler, who is working to save two of the most imperiled and least known creatures in the forest: the flattened musk turtle and the Black Warrior waterdog.

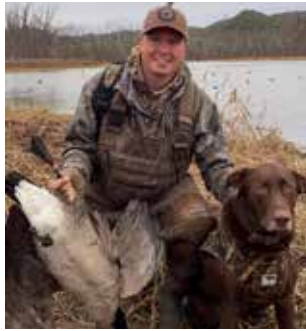


NEW STAFF

AARON HEBEISEN

Chapter Coordinator (IL, IA, MN, MO, WI)

Aaron Hebeisen grew up in rural east-central Minnesota. His lifelong passion for wild animals and an outdoor lifestyle led him to a bachelor's degree in animal ecology from Iowa State University. Serving in positions with the MN Conservation Corps, Minnesota DNR and USDA in wildlife disease research cemented his excitement for protecting and teaching about the natural world.



Aaron has been a BHA member since 2016 and served for five years on the Minnesota chapter board. He now lives in southeastern Minnesota with his wife, Olivia, and gets out in the field as often as possible.

JAMESON HIBBS

Chapter Coordinator (MI, OH, WV, KY, IN)

Jameson Hibbs is an Indiana native, growing up in a rural neighborhood near Terre Haute.

He attended Indiana State University and obtained his bachelors' degree in parks and recreation management, where he fostered a deep and broad love for outdoor recreation.



Jameson has been an active member of the Indiana Park and Recreation Association, sits on the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's Indiana chapter committee and serves on various tourism boards. He has assisted as an hunter safety instructor for the past three years. It's very important to Jameson to help secure the future of public lands for his daughter and ensure excellent opportunities exist for future generations.

SPRING ISSUE CORRECTION

In Jon Osborn's article, "Explosive Bliss," featured in the spring 2022 journal, the editor – not the author – mistakenly identified the Pigeon River Country as being in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It's actually in the northern Lower Peninsula, and the editor should have known that since he's from Michigan!

BHA'S 2022 AWARD RECIPIENTS



BHA's Collegiate Club members throw their hats into the air to celebrate their graduations.

BHA's annual awards honor unequalled commitment, tireless effort and ongoing dedication to public lands and waters, fish and wildlife and hunting and fishing.

BHA's **Sigurd F. Olson Award** recognizes outstanding effort conserving rivers, lakes or wetland habitat. The 2022 Olson award was presented to Lukas Leaf and Spencer Shaver, longtime advocates for the Boundary Waters Wilderness in Minnesota.

The **Aldo Leopold Award** honors exceptional work and dedication to the conservation of terrestrial wildlife habitat. Liz Lynch, a BHA Wyoming chapter leader from Jackson, is the recipient of the 2022 Leopold award.

The **Jim Posewitz Award** acknowledges outstanding ethical behavior in the field and the education of the outdoor public on the importance of ethical behavior. The winner of the 2022 Posewitz award is Mike Woods, of East Providence, Rhode Island.

BHA's **Rachel Carson Award** honors young leaders for outstanding work on behalf of hunting, angling and conservation. This year's winner, Mateen Hessami, is a longtime BHA college club leader, having served as president of the club at the University of Montana before taking on leadership of the club at the University of British Columbia Okanagan, where he is attending grad school.

2022 saw BHA launch a new award, the **AFI Volunteer of the Year**. The winner was nominated and chosen by their fellow volunteers based on the positive impact they have had on BHA's Armed Forces Initiative, the military community, and the United States of America. This year's AFI honoree is Marty Bartram from the great state of North Carolina.

The **Larry Fischer Award** honors the memory and contributions of a longtime BHA board member by recognizing exceptional dedication by a business to BHA's mission. The 2021 Fischer awardee is Traeger.

The **Ted Trueblood Award** is bestowed by BHA for outstanding communications on behalf of backcountry habitat and values. The 2022 Trueblood award was presented to journalist Rob Drieslein, editor and publisher of Outdoor News, a suite of outdoor publications that are published in states across the Great Lakes region.

The **George Bird Grinnell Award** honors the outstanding BHA chapter of the year. BHA's Arkansas chapter was presented with the 2022 award.

Lastly, the **Mike Beagle-Chairman's Award**, named after a BHA founder, is given to an individual who shows outstanding effort on behalf of BHA. The 2022 Beagle award winner is Joel Webster, of Missoula, Montana, a former co-chair of BHA's North American board who is the vice president of conservation at the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. 🐾

THANKS FOR ATTENDING RENDEZVOUS!



Jaime Teigen of Burch Barrel (left) and Outdoor Afro Founder and CEO Rue Mapp (right) enjoy the bounty from the Wild Game Cookoff.



Brandon Dale and Zsakee Lewis present during Campfire Stories.



BHA President and CEO Land Tawney fuels Saturday night's closing bonfire.



Chef Justin Townsend serves up rattlesnake during the wild game cookoff.

Another outstanding gathering of Public Land Owners is in the books. From the Field to Table Dinner to seminars from Jonathan Wilkins, Clay Hayes and many others, to Brewfest and Campfire Stories, bonds were formed among BHA members from far and wide. And memories were made. Our sincerest thank you to all who attended and supported the event, from members to corporate partners. Visit BHA's social media pages and blog to recap more of the great event and find the details for next year's Rendezvous. See you next year! 🐾

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