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## FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the PLTA News is long-delayed, in large part because of turmoil in the organization. We have gone through a good deal of discussion, argument, and soul-searching regarding the future of the organization.



The result is that a bare majority of the board voted to continue PLTA (vs. dissolve the organization), with an expanded focus on promoting llama packing and representing the interests of the working llama community. And by working llamas, that definition is expanded to include driving llamas (one of my favorite activities!), which are also users of state and federal recreational facilities.

Several members of the board have opted to end their tenure, and new members have been added. We thank Nancy Hester, Laura Higgins, and Mark Pommier for their service to PLTA. Joyce Johnson, Lisa Wolf and I will be continuing to support a revitalized organization with new Board members Gayle Noga, Debra Langley-Boyer, and Regina O’Brien. Officers and responsibilities are listed on page 3.

Lisa Wolf has taken on the website. The previous webmaster suffered a hard drive crash, and in



*Continued on page 2*

## **PLTA Board**

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## **From the Editor, continued**

conjunction with lapse of hosting service, lost the files that comprised the website. However, Lisa is building a new one and will be posting our documents and pertinent information as she reconstructs the site, which is coming along nicely. Visit it at [www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org).

Member contributions to the PLTA News are welcome. I'd like to publish your articles on packing, pack trials, newly certified llamas, and backcountry hints and recipes. My job is to edit out any grammatical and spelling errors, so don't let fear of writing stop you from sending a piece. Photos are always desired to add interest and color to articles. And the PLTA News is a great venue for advertising gear and llamas that you would like to sell, or just to promote your ranch and breeding program.

Still humming along...

Susan Gawarecki, Editor

## **PRESIDENT'S UPDATE**

Greetings from Your Interim President,

Let me tell you little about myself. I met my first llamas in the early 1980's. They had been used to help tree planters haul loads up steep mountain slopes in the forests of western Oregon. Unfortunately the llamas had been mishandled to the point that when I met them they hated all things human. Their owner had given up on them and was happy to let me "see what they were like."

They were spitting, kicking, wild maniacs. Good thing I didn't know better, I just couldn't keep away even though it meant spending a lot of time being green. The owner eventually gave the llamas to me. The llamas eventually decided humans weren't that bad after all, and I decided that any animal that could come from such an abused situation and become so gentle that I could trust them to lead a three-year-old around, was a creature I wanted to spend time with. I still can't get enough of them.

After many years of packing, hiking, and wonderful companionship, my llamas passed away and I wandered llama-less. Circumstances landed me in a new part of the country with new friends who just happened to have llamas. I was leaning over the fence one day commenting that such superbly athletic llamas as I was seeing ought to be out working. The response was "have at."

My plans did not include llama training, but llamas are magnetic and I was quickly stuck to them and busy training them to work in strings in rough country. I spent a while being green, but with llamas being what they are, we sorted it out. Pretty soon my eight packers and I were taking people on trips in the backcountry,

*Continued on page 3*

## ***President's Update, continued***

training 4H kids, and working for the local agencies. I also joined my friends Becky Cunningham and Anne Sheeter in their llama business, the Burns Llama Trailblazers.

As members of the PLTA who hosted pack trials every year, Becky and Anne put me to work as a steward practically the day we met. I was quickly sold on the concept of pack trials and goals of the organization so I became a certifier. That was over a decade ago and I have certified at least one trial a year every year since. For me, the PLTA and llamas go together.

A few years back, knowing that the PLTA officers had been in place a long time and were growing weary, and knowing that the PLTA was such a good thing that the world would be a less wonderful place without it, I accepted a position on the Board of Directors with the idea that I could just stay in the background and help take care of the minutia of running things.

This spring the exhaustion of the old guard came to a head. The Board of Directors took a vote to end the organization. The result was tied and those of us on the 'keep it alive' side were given the opportunity to find people willing to put forth the energy to revitalize the organization. We have done that, and wouldn't you know; I ended up in the President's seat.

There are now three new members of the Board. Gayle Nogas holds down the secretary slot, Debra Langley-Boyer is Vice President, and Gina Obrien has taken on the treasurer's duties. Joyce Johnson remains the membership coordinator and Susan Gawarecki continues in charge of the newsletter. One position remains vacant. The officers are in position for the interim, until official elections can be held.

The new members bring new energy and new ideas. The Mileage Program was re-installed in the spring, and two new activities, the PLTA Challenge and GeoLlama are up for consideration. Full explanations of how these activities would work are posted on the web as part of my message there. This is your organization. The board of Directors is intent on supporting your interests and broadening the scope of the PLTA to be more inclusive and adaptable. Please let us know what you think.

Each of the Board members has been assigned tasks beyond those their positions require. Each will happily accept help from you the members. If you have ideas or energy that you are willing to devote to help make the PLTA a vital and thriving way to support working llamas and their companions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Lisa Wolf, President

## **MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT**

Change is coming to the Pack Llama Trial Association. It has been over seven years since a few of us took on the task of resurrecting the organization. We knew we had big shoes to fill and hard work ahead of us but felt the PLTA was too valuable to let die. We polled members to see what they wanted from their organization and in response we added insurance, new trial levels, a mileage program, and tried to simplify paperwork.

Despite our efforts, the last few years membership has remained fairly stagnant as has the number of trials being held throughout the country. Certifying seems to be inconsistent and it is a continual struggle to find and keep Board members and volunteers. The call to fold the PLTA has been raised frequently at our BOD meetings but we'd rally and try harder or, more likely, be too stubborn to give up. No more. Burn out has finally taken its toll and 3 of the 6 current directors have decided to leave. Laura Higgins and I are the last of the "old school" to go and we are in the process of turning the organization over to the new Board. The remaining directors will be joined by Gayle Noga and Deb Langley-Boyer. I hear they have many changes in store for the PLTA and it is our hope that they will be able to build on what has come before them and turn it into a thriving organization.

On a personal note, I will always be grateful for the friendships and opportunities that being a part of the PLTA has brought to me. Perhaps we'll meet out on the trail...

Nancy Hester  
Outgoing PLTA President

# MEET THE NEW PLTA BOARD MEMBERS

## Debra (Debby) Langley-Boyer

Debby Langley-Boyer loves art, nature and people (kids especially). She grew up here and there as a military brat. Newfoundland and Montana are the big memories, then on to Washington State where she still lives. Her family spent most of the time in the outdoors especially fishing, hunting, camping and with horses. She was educated as a teacher with art, Spanish and library sciences. Most of the teaching time was with Jr high or middle school kids. Yes, she enjoys working with teens, no she is not nuts. Debby is married to Dean and they have two grown girls, Melissa and Michelle. Dean is a retired engineer, Melissa a 3rd grade teacher and Michelle a structural engineer. We spend much of our time in the outdoors.



Debby has spent most of her life trying to make a difference in people's lives and the world we live in. She loves many types of art like pottery, stain glass and baskets. Currently felting, Ukrainian eggs and photography are her focus. Much of her free time has been spent volunteering for kids or nature. Her activities have spanned from Sexual Assault work, Business & Professional women, Peninsula Scholarships and Camp Fire to Back Country horsemen, Leave No Trace, Outdoor skills and of course llama activities.

Llamas came into her life after a horse pack trip. Some llamas terrified one of the horses. Her sister wanted llamas near her horses and Debby wanted llamas to backpack with. So Debby found two free llamas and moved them to her sister's farm. After a few years Debby got her own pasture and moved the llamas home with her. Carmella and Diamond came with many problems, both untouchable and unwanted. Debby read, trained herself and gathered mentors so she could train them to pack. Diamond was imprinted without llamas and that

people were her servants. Not anymore. Carmella went from home to home and was deemed dangerous. Not anymore. Both are great packers and do PR for llamas in the community at schools, camps, special needs kids or a rest home. A few issues still remain but by and all they go everywhere and do most everything.

That was over 10 years ago, why didn't I have llamas before? I love them and can't imagine life or a pack trip without them.

## Gayle Noga

I have been taking care of and loving llamas for many years and am co-owner of Rattlesnake Ridge Ranch. My husband and I have raised llamas from newborn to our oldest who recently passed at the age of 23. We are packers, drivers and rescuers. Our primary focus has been the working llama and to that end we also have been the primary organizers of the PNW Back Country Llama Rendezvous for the last 8 years.

- I have run my own successful Gluten Free custom bakery, which entailed bookkeeping, web setup and maintenance, sales, marketing and close interaction with the public.
- I understand the need for good communication both written and verbal
- I have years of experience implementing and organizing events and large groups
- I am American Red Cross trained in Logistics, Disaster Services Administration, MAS S Care, Shelter Administration, and Damage Assessment
- I am Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) trained
- I am Certified as a Family Historian and have over 40 years experience in this field, and I understand the importance of family lines in humans and animals
- I have years of experience teaching the importance of animal health and well being
- I am Leave No Trace (LNT) trained and enjoy the out of doors, packing with llamas in general
- I understand the importance to integrate horses into the mix to prevent misunderstanding between the owners

*Continued on page 5*

**Meet the New PLTA Board Members, continued**

As a member of the PLTA, I have learned much and know that this organization can be a key instrument in reviving the support and enthusiasm for the working llama. By having the opportunity to show just what our animals can do and have them certified helps promote the llamas that we love.

**Regina (Gina) O'Brien**

I met my first two llamas, Spot and Leadbelly, around 1989, through a co-worker on the Siskiyou National Forest in southern Oregon. She had rescued them from a very bad situation and worked with them until they became the calm, easy-going pack llamas to which I was introduced. Then she decided that I needed to be rescued from my ignorance of these magnificent, noble creatures. Especially her magnificent, noble creatures.

While I have never owned llamas – my life has been too nomadic for that responsibility – through my friend I have experienced the joys and perplexities that come with being around llamas. My “animal” experience is through dog training and working as a biologist for the Forest Service. It did not take me long to discover that camelids are nothing like any of the other critters I have dealt with. It took perhaps a little longer to fully appreciate that fact, especially when it came to traversing the backcountry. The habitat restoration projects I have done on the various forests made it very evident how beneficial a low-impact packer could be hauling equipment into fragile landscapes where motorized vehicles were not allowed. I lobbied for pack llamas whenever I could.

I learned about the PLTA through friends. Their dedication to the organization that sets standards for responsible handling and training of their beloved pack llamas was always inspiring. When the PLTA was struggling to keep going, I joined the group and volunteered to help any way I could. I

did not expect to be put on the Board of Directors.

While I do not have the “classic” llama background – I still have much to learn about them – I do have a background in working with various groups: Search and Rescue, dog clubs, federal interdisciplinary teams and ‘grass roots’ councils focusing on land management and habitat restoration. With this experience, I can offer knowledge of functional meetings, clear communications, logistics and paperwork, different perspectives and ideas on “routine llama” topics – think of it as a form of cross training – and maybe keep people from re-inventing the wheel.

It is an exciting time for the PLTA: we are looking to increase membership and member involvement, get a clearer idea of what the PLTA is and what it can do for its members as well as the general population who has yet to discover what magnificent and noble creatures llamas can be.

It is going to take a lot of work up front. There is a lot that needs to be straightened up and sorted out, and it is going to take time. A lot of time. Please be patient with us while we do this; any suggestions or volunteer time will be greatly appreciated.

**VISIT PLTA ON  
THE WEB AT  
[www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org)**

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# PLTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS DECISIONS

Members of the PLTA Board have been making decisions via email meetings and votes, and also held a meeting via conference call on August 12, 2014. Summarized below are recent decisions by the Board.

The current board of six members will remain in place until January 2015, at which time a seventh member will be added and officers elected. In the meantime, potential new board members will be identified and vetted.

Changes to the sanctioning fees were finalized and approved. A Basic only single pack trial is \$35.00, a basic only double trial is \$40.00, any trial with more than one level is \$45.00, and all trials by the same sponsor within the current calendar year will be \$50.00. This is to encourage sponsors to plan for additional pack trials during the year.

Changing the organization's name and mission statement was discussed. A motion was passed to change the PLTA from Pack Llama Trial Association to Pack Llama Trail Association to better reflect the broadened scope of the organization. This change also brings us into alignment with our charter, as the Idaho Secretary of State has the organization listed as the Pack Llama Trail Association. The change was voted on and approved by all participating in the August 12 conference call, and it will be sent to membership for final vote.

The mission statement as amended reflects the name change and is broadened to include all working llamas instead of just pack llamas. This would

primarily include driving llamas, which may be users of backcountry and public parks, roads, and other byways, but not necessarily guardian or therapy animals. The proposed wording, to be approved by the membership, is: "The Pack Llama Trail Association is a charitable and educational organization. The mission of the PLTA is to preserve and promote working llamas, through education of the public, and members of the association as to breeding, raising, training, care, and safe and humane uses of working llamas as companions."

The IRS designation of PLTA's non-profit status was lost last year due to late and lack of filing of annual reports by the previous responsible officers. The current Board will file the appropriate paperwork to register PLTA as a 501(c)(4) organization, which will enable us to lobby for llama access to state and federal recreational resources.

The Board provisionally approved changes to the Pack Trial requirements that would allow additional mileage to substitute for elevation change. This change must also be approved by the membership. The full proposal is outlined beginning on page 16.

The Board approved adding the following new PLTA programs: PLTA Challenge, GeoLlama, and Trail Work Support and Maintenance. See pages 9-10.

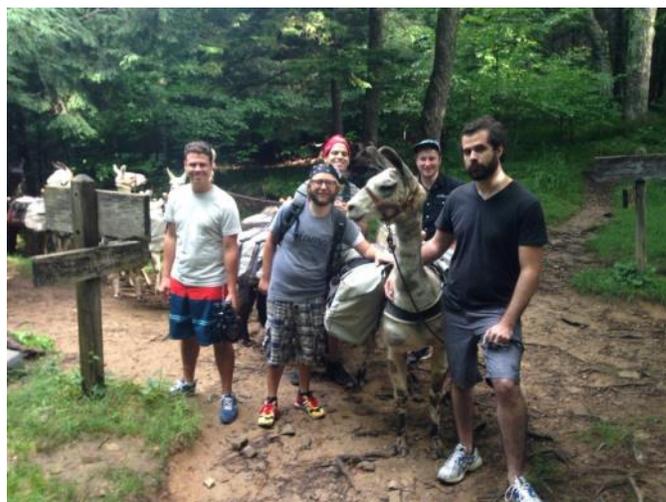
An online PLTA Membership meeting will take place from September 2-16, 2014, with to be sent to Debra Langley-Boyer at [ddboyerMM@msn.com](mailto:ddboyerMM@msn.com). Look for the announcement in your email inbox.

## LLAMA NATION

One of the final decisions of the previous PLTA Board was to donate \$1000 to the documentary *Llama Nation* to support its portrayal of the working pack llama. This donation helped fund the travel for the film crew to attend the Backcountry Llama Rendezvous in Estacada, Oregon. There they had the assistance of Ida the llama who carried their film equipment into the mountains.

On the other side of the country, the filmmakers accompanied the famous LeConte llamas (right) on their trek to LeConte Lodge in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This string of pack llamas makes the 15-mile round trip three times a week to supply the lodge.

See the article on page 18 to learn more about the genesis of *Llama Nation* and the people behind the cameras. Also check out their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/llamanationfilm> for updates on their activities.



# NEWLY CERTIFIED LLAMAS

## PLTA Extreme Pack Llama (2013)

**BLT Snowy Owl, #1133**

**Owner Lisa Wolf**

"That big white llama," the man said, "What's his name?"

What big white llama, I wondered. I didn't have any big white llamas. But the guy was pointing and I looked again. There stood Snowy Owl. Sure enough, he was taller than the rest. How on earth did my 19 pound cria get so big?

That incident happened when Snowy was four and on his first working pack trip. By the time he was seven and finished growing, he was a good sized fellow indeed, but he never outgrew his gentle nature.

Son of UC Wahoo, EPL, and Becket's Snowy Egret, BLT [Burns Llama Trailblazers'] Snowy Owl is a strong packer who can be trusted in any situation. He enjoys working any position in his regular string of six llamas, but does not hesitate to solo, often making long wilderness trips away from the rest of the herd.



Last fall, Snowy caused quite a stir when Cycle Oregon came to town. An annual organized bicycle tour, hundreds of cyclists and support crews converged on our tiny, isolated community, taking over the town. To help them along, the local Search and Rescue unit gathered in the predawn

gloom, ready to haul tents and gear from campsites to waiting trucks. Snowy Owl, decked out in enough reflectors to make a police horse proud, marched right in among the ATVs and their trailers. Snowy kushed to allow the cyclists to sling their five foot long, 60 lb duffle bags over his saddle then strode across the camp field as the cyclists watched in awe. He, like the guys with the ATVs, was working for tips that would help support Search and Rescue. Snowy brought in more cash than anyone else.

At full maturity, and well experienced, Snowy has become the mentor for training the young packers in our herd. He teaches them manners on the feed ground, calms them in the string, and shows them how it is supposed to be done. We couldn't manage without him.

Since the last PLTA News, the following llamas earned PLTA certificates. Llamas are listed with their PLTA number. If you would like your llama's story featured, please send the newsletter editor a write-up and photo.

### **Basic Pack Llamas**

1341 ALCL Spats  
1354 BLT Wahoo's Caliope  
1339 BLT Wahoo's Jasper  
1340 BLT Wahoo's Merlin  
1334 FRH Apache Wind Rider  
1333 Jonny Layne

### **Advanced Pack Llamas**

1330 ALCL Black Jack  
1287 Bandit  
1289 Buckwheat  
1288 Cowboy  
1221 RM Ice Z  
1189 RM Jack Smack  
1220 Wheatfield's Rocky Road

### **Master Pack Llamas**

1187 BLT Wahoo's Mage  
1186 BLT Wahoo's Wizard  
1142 Circle T Rusty Elway  
1344 HI TRL John Critchon  
1312 Lost Creek Credo  
1353 Latitude's Corazon  
1309 Smoot's Creek Spiryt

# MILEAGE PROGRAM

The PLTA Board decided to retain the endangered Mileage Program after polling members on the Facebook page. This program is now open to all PLTA members at no additional fee, but participating llamas must be registered with PLTA. Carolyn Mathews has volunteered to be the Program Coordinator; to contact her call (541) 589-1406 or email [mushbronco@yahoo.com](mailto:mushbronco@yahoo.com). Please put "PLTA MP" in the subject line of emails and include your PLTA member number and name. A letter was sent to members by PLTA Interim President Lisa Wolf regarding the revitalized program, and details regarding the program can be found on the PLTA website at <http://packllama.org/mileage.html>.

Many llama people want to hike with their llamas and support the PLTA, but in a way that does not involve participation in the regulated and formal-

ized trials. The Mileage Program is designed to support these interests, and more.

The Mileage Program serves three main functions:

1. To encourage activity and fitness in working llamas.
2. As a means of demonstrating the capabilities of an individual llama, and llamas in general. The Mileage Program shows the level and extent at which a llama is actually working. This provides a measure of a llama's worth as a packer and companion.
3. To make public the achievement of individual llamas. Besides allowing bragging rights for the owner, this information can be used as a marketing tool for breeders and commercial packers. Accumulating mileage demonstrates that a llama is actually working.

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PLTA Mileage Program Cumulative Miles  
1JAN14 Through 7JUL14

| Llama PLTA #       | Llama Registered Name   | Total Miles    | Most Recent Update | Owner/Member Name                       | Owner/Member PLTA # |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------|---|---------------------|
| pending            | BLT Aster               | 6.6            | 6/18/2014          | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Anne Sheeter | 200                 |
| 1369               | BLT Gypsum              | 285.75         | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1339               | BLT Jasper              | 18.82          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| pending            | BLT Maggie Mae          | 1              | 6/30/2014          | CJ Bar Ranch - Carolyn Mathews          | 407                 |
| 1061               | BLT Obsidian Edition    | 276.15         | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 708                | BLT Sebastian           | 55.65          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1133               | BLT Snowy Owl           | 271.09         | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1354               | BLT Wahoo's Caliope     | 28.65          | 6/18/2014          | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Anne Sheeter | 200                 |
| 1370               | BLT Wahoo's Gaius       | 27.95          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1187               | BLT Wahoo's Mage        | 290.97         | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1340               | BLT Wahoo's Merlin      | 30.92          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1186               | BLT Wahoo's Wizard      | 11.94          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 292                 |
| 1204               | Burnbrook Kilamanjaro   | 7.5            | 6/30/2014          | Mark Brindley                           | 353                 |
| 1205               | Burnbrook Warrego       | 2.8            | 6/30/2014          | Mark Brindley                           | 353                 |
| 1335               | Cautley Fair O'Joy      | 265.29         | 6/30/2014          | CJ Bar Ranch - Carolyn Mathews          | 407                 |
| 1349               | CJ Bar Wahoo Mariah     | 155.96         | 6/30/2014          | CJ Bar Ranch - Carolyn Mathews          | 407                 |
| pending            | JLL Dash for Cash       | 13             | 6/23/2014          | Marilyn Holler                          | 71                  |
| 828                | JLL Nickelodean         | 13             | 6/23/2014          | Marilyn Holler                          | 71                  |
| 1362               | Johnny's Tinker Bell    | 119.19         | 6/30/2014          | CJ Bar Ranch - Carolyn Mathews          | 407                 |
| 1353               | Latitude's Corazon      | 28.05          | 6/18/2014          | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Anne Sheeter | 200                 |
| 1351               | Latitudes Marty McFly   | 22.94          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1350               | Latitudes Silver Patron | 44.5           | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| pending            | Lewis                   | 7              | 6/23/2014          | Marilyn Holler                          | 71                  |
| 1348               | Llama Dream Ebony       | 293.51         | 6/30/2014          | CJ Bar Ranch - Carolyn Mathews          | 407                 |
| 1178               | Remus                   | 29.92          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1352               | Tatouine                | 77.18          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1033               | UC Wahoo                | 26.38          | 7/8/2014           | Burns Llama Trailblazers - Lisa Wolf    | 282                 |
| 1203               | Ulonga Chillli          | 10.3           | 6/30/2014          | Mark Brindley                           | 353                 |
| 1218               | Whitney                 | 7.8            | 6/23/2014          | Marilyn Holler                          | 71                  |
| <b>TOTAL MILES</b> |                         | <b>2429.81</b> |                    |   |                     |

# NEW PLTA INITIATIVES

Three new PLTA initiatives are being launched. These are the PLTA Challenge, GeoLlama, and Trail Work Support and Maintenance. These are still under development, so member input is welcome. A description and links for each are given below.

## PLTA Challenge

The PLTA Challenge is intended to be an event in which llamas and handlers participate for experience, entertainment and education. Rather than being an official certification of llama's abilities against written standards, as the pack trial is, this flexible program allows participation by a wide spectrum of llamas and handlers. A challenge event is a social outing in which llama owners who are not breeders or packers can enjoy the company of other llama owners, while in a natural setting. It is also an educational opportunity that allows those with little experience to interact with more experienced llama owners. Details are given on the PLTA website at <http://packllama.org/pltaDocs/pltaChallenge140728.pdf>.

The Challenge is designed to require minimal record keeping and paperwork. Like the pack trial, the Challenge involves stewards leading groups of llamas and their handlers through a certified course while encountering predetermined obstacles. Unlike a pack trial, no llama/handler team is required to attempt any obstacle they choose not to, nor are they required to carry a specified load or hike a specified distance. Points are acquired for what each llama accomplishes. Llamas can attempt obstacles they have not seen before and not be eliminated if they do not complete them. The handler can choose to withdraw at any time if they feel they or their animal is tired.

Since there are no required obstacles, the event will have more potential venues. For example, with water not being required, one can set up a course in a desert environment and find obstacles available in that location and appropriate in that environment. Equally liberating, a course can be set up in a flat landscape without concern for obtaining elevation gain. The course may be as long or short as event, as steep or flat, as easy or rugged as planners choose as long as the basic criterion of a "realistic packing environment while allowing for variations in conditions that are peculiar to different parts of the country" is met.

Points can be accrued at events throughout the year. At the end of the year a congratulatory certificate is issued for each participating llama. This certificate lists the number of points the llama ac-

quired during the year. To enhance "bragging rights" of the handler/owner, points will be published on the PLTA website. Specifics of safety and types of obstacles are the same as for a pack trial (see the PLTA Pack Trial Manual version 2010).

Since courses will be documented electronically using GPS tracking, and stewards will be trained to identify obstacles, assign a point value of one or two points to each, and evaluate llama performance, the presence of a PLTA Certifier is not required. This makes it much easier for local organizations to stage Challenge events. Steward training and testing will standardize expectations.

Anne Sheeter is Program Coordinator for the PLTA Challenge. To contact her, call (541) 573-2628 or email [sheeterg@hotmail.com](mailto:sheeterg@hotmail.com). This program is still in the development phase, so if you are interested in serving on the committee or have suggestions for improvement, please drop her a line.

## GeoLlama

What is GeoLlama? This is a combination activity of llama packing/hiking and finding backcountry locations with GPS and maps. There are three components to GeoLlama; caches, obstacles, and sites. For those who chose, points can be accumulated for llamas involved in finding GeoLlama locations. These points will be tabulated by the GeoLlama Coordinator and displayed with the llama's name for bragging rights on the PLTA website. The activity is open to all PLTA members. It takes place at members' convenience in locations determined by participants. Details can be found at <http://packllama.org/pltaDocs/GeoLlama140725.pdf>.

- 1) **GeoCache.** This option involves finding something that has been stashed. It is a treasure hunt that requires a "keeper" who not only establishes a location, but in that location, maintains a trove of objects of minor value that the finder can keep, replacing it with an object of their own of equally minor value. The cache may include a log book that finders can sign and leave comments in.
- 2) **GeoObstacle.** In this GeoLlama activity the objective is to locate and negotiate a predefined llama obstacle. The obstacles meet the definitions and requirements of PLTA pack trials as defined in the Pack Trial Manual. They are assigned a point value depending on their complexity; one point for simple obstacles, two points for complex obstacles. Llamas earn

*Continued on page 10*

### ***New PLTA Initiatives, continued***

these points by having themselves photographed negotiating the obstacle, and submitting that photograph to the GeoLlama Coordinator.

- 3) **GeoSite.** These are locations in which the llama poses for a picture in the same view as shown in the GeoLlama database. These pictures may be submitted to the GeoLlama Coordinator as proof of accomplishment and may earn as many as ten points for the llama, depending on how challenging it is to access the location.

GeoLlama is still in the development phase and is in need of a Program Coordinator. If you are interested in helping with this program, contact Lisa Wolf at [wolfisa55@yahoo.com](mailto:wolfisa55@yahoo.com) or (541) 413-0341.

### **Trail Work Support and Maintenance**

Trail Work Support and Maintenance is a proposed program yet to be fully developed. Backcountry horse user groups do an extensive amount of trail maintenance as volunteers on state and federal lands. It is a way to build goodwill with land managers and ensure that user groups continue to be welcome. Similarly, llama packers should set aside some time to support their local hiking venues with volunteer maintenance efforts or support by hauling supplies and tools into the back country. This is also a great way to condition llamas, practice a pack string, or introduce new people and animals to packing. PLTA is looking for someone who is willing to design guidelines for such a program and track volunteers' efforts by location, llamas used, miles packed, time/man hours logged, and type of volunteer work. If you are interested in developing or coordinating this program, contact Lisa Wolf at (541) 413-0341 or [wolfisa55@yahoo.com](mailto:wolfisa55@yahoo.com).

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### ***Mileage Program, continued***

Mileage is tracked and records compiled for each llama. Mileage is to be reported quarterly on the honor system, using forms found on the PLTA website. Mileage may be accrued whenever a llama is working. In the case of strings, mileage maybe reported for any llama in the string that is a member of the PLTA. Miles accrued during any activity apply, including but not limited to, training, conditioning, and commercial work. A walk around the ranch, hike in the wild lands, or a march down the parade route—each of these applies equally. The llama is not required to use a pack system or carry any weight during Mileage Program activities, however, if it does, PLTA encourages the owner not to

## **UPCOMING PACK TRIALS**

### **PLTA Sanctioned Events**

Sunday, September 28, 2014—Redneck Moose Performance Show and Basic & Advanced Pack Trials, Ellijay, Georgia. Contact Cathie Kindler at [llamajudge@gmail.com](mailto:llamajudge@gmail.com) or (419) 610-1748. Information about the event may be found at [http://alsashow.org/Redneck\\_Moose\\_2014\\_pack\\_trial.pdf](http://alsashow.org/Redneck_Moose_2014_pack_trial.pdf).

### **PLTA Sanctioning Pending**

Saturday & Sunday, October 18-19, 2014—Advanced & Master Pack Trials, Heppner, Oregon. Contact Gayle Noga at (509) 545-5903 or [llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com](mailto:llamas@rattlesnakeridgeranch.com).

Saturday, November 1, 2014—Fall Basic & Advanced Pack Trials, Furnace Creek Farm, Cumberland Furnace, Tennessee. Contact Tori Howk at (615) 789-0036 or [tmh2399@yahoo.com](mailto:tmh2399@yahoo.com) or Rebecca Wood at (910) 233-7331 or [roxywood@aol.com](mailto:roxywood@aol.com).

### ***Do You Want to Host a Pack Trial?***

If you'd like to host a trial in your area but aren't sure how to proceed, let us know. We can answer your questions and provide the necessary information and support to help make your event a successful one.

### ***Free Publicity for Members' Events***

Please contact us if you are planning a Packing Event and would like to post the information in the *PLTA News* and on our website.

exceed Pack Trial weight guidelines for its age and ability.

A Mileage Program Yahoo Group site has been created to provide an electronic forum for participants to exchange information. As it is invitation only (no spammers allowed!), contact Carolyn to be added to the group.

At the end of each year, certificates for each MP llama will be sent to the member showing the actual number of miles their llama(s) traveled during that year. Their accomplishments will also be reported semiannually in the *PLTA News* and on the website.

# SSLA 2014 SPRING PACK LLAMA TRIALS & RENDEZVOUS, APRIL 11-13, 2014

By Carol Creech, photos submitted by Carol Creech, Maylene Hall, and Vickie Balch

At DuPont State Forest this year, we had 21 people attending with 16 llamas. We had fabulous weather, with plenty of sunshine, 70 degree afternoons, and a bright almost-full moon at night.

Friday afternoon manageability tasks (5 minute picket, trailer loading and unloading, un-haltering and haltering, saddling and loading panniers) were quickly finished.



Early Saturday morning, the small advanced group (see left) left on their 5.7 mile course with 850' elevation gain and 10 obstacles. Pass through gate obstacle, bouncy bridge, two dead-fall areas, duck under, log jump, a remove-panniers-and foot-check, 2 water obstacles, and rock rubble were conquered during the day by both llamas. For excitement, several groups of bicyclists and two brave horses were encountered and passed safely. Two other horses, upon spying the scary llamas on the other side, refused the Reasonover Creek crossing and turned back. The following two llamas went on the advanced course and passed with flying colors: Blackjack, owed by Debbie Andrews and led by Amanda Brantley, and Simply Irresistible (IRS),

owned and led by Hunter Snow. Kurt Pihera, Rebecca Alexander, and Tom Wilson were course stewards for Advanced.

The very large Basic group (cover photo and right) was comprised of Spats, led by Debbie Andrews; Spice, led by Hank Balch; Joker, the Balch's llama, led by Chuck Barat; Steeler, led by Belinda Snow; Reepicheep, led by Greg Hall; and Bandit, let by Janessa Hall. Jammie, an-



other Balch llama, led by Allie and Duane Taylor; Trev and King, led by Vicki Sundberg and Jessica Wilson; and Linda Barat leading Ella the dog were "fun hikers" on the course. Carol Creech and Shay Stratford were stewards, and Karen Pihera, leading elder llama White Lightning, was the course certifier. The Basic course was 3.4 miles long with 350' elevation gain and five obstacles: pass through gate, log jump, deadfall, duck under (left), and water crossing. The excitement on this course consisted

*Continued on page 12*

**SSLA 2013 Spring Pack Trials & Rendezvous, *continued***



of several unplanned bicycle obstacles and a black snake obstacle. Since our group was so large, the bicyclists were forced to yield to the llamas (as required by DuPont rules). The snake refused to give up his sunny spot and had to be gently lifted with a hiking stick and relocated to a safer spot.

Post-trial activities were llama cart rides from Trev and King (left), side trips to Bridal Veil Falls and Lake Julia, barrel haircuts, llamas grazing in their green paddocks, and people enjoying too many snacks on the front porch. Later we feasted on a delicious Saturday potluck dinner (below) and Sunday morning omelets. A fun weekend was had by all.



*Above: Carol Creech with pack llamas John, APL & Pilgrim, APL.*



*Left: Two llamas waiting to leave on the basic pack trial.*

*Below: Toasting marshmallows.*



*Below: Course certifier Karen Pihera gives instructions before the pack trial participants head out.*



# NACA RENDEZVOUS

By Nancy Hester

During the weekend of May 17-18, 2014, the North American Ccara Association (NACA) hosted a group of breeders and admirers of working llamas at the Boise, Idaho fairgrounds. Folks came to learn more about the classic Ccara llamas that are so ideally suited to their work as beasts of burden. As anyone searching to locate quality pack llamas can attest to, these animals are becoming quite difficult to obtain. Thus, in March of 2008, the first official international registry for the working llama was finalized and approved by the ILR. Its mission being to seek out, preserve, perpetuate, and promote the remaining Ccara type llamas which are now becoming a rarity in North America. NACA has been working hard towards this goal ever since.

Several up and coming Ccara breeders attended the event and it was nice to see an influx of younger people devoting themselves to saving the breed. These folks got into breeding out of necessity as they were unable to sustain their outfitting businesses and packing needs by purchasing llamas. Thousands of miles on the trail taught them what to look for in a working animal. Many have been scouring the country and doing intense



ILR searches in an attempt to locate suitable breeding stock. Most have herd sizes ranging from 30-50 llamas and all reported high demand for packers, many even have waiting lists for folks wanting to purchase pack stock. People hoping to find pack llamas for sale also attended. While unable to make any purchases, they were able to network with breeders and obtain some leads that will hopefully help them in their quest. The NACA web site is being updated to include a list of owners/breeders of Ccara llamas in an effort to facilitate such searches.

Thirteen llamas were screened into the registry and participation in the screening process allowed those in attendance to both observe and get hands on experience as to what the registry is looking for in a working llama. It was a successful event and NACA is pleased to announce that 3 new Board members, who are also screeners, have been added. This brings the Board up to seven members. Joining BOD members Wes Holmquist, Bob Schimpf, Al Ellis, and Nancy Hester are Beau Baty of Idaho, Gus Hill, also of Idaho, and Tom Nielson of Montana. You can learn more about the organization and its screening process at [www.ccarallama.com](http://www.ccarallama.com).

## PLTA Media Information

For the latest updates and trial information or to renew your membership, go to [www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org). Members are welcome to post free classified ads (for items related to packing) online and to link web sites. Do we have your current email address so that we can alert you when important issues arise and new events are posted? For all web-related benefits, contact our webmaster Lisa Wolf at (541) 413-0341 or [wolfiisa55@yahoo.com](mailto:wolfiisa55@yahoo.com) or mail to 575 East Jefferson, Burns, OR 97720.

Interested in advertising in the *PLTA News*? See page 7 for details. Have a great packing article that you'd like to share, or a trail tip or famous recipe, or a picture that says a thousand words? Contact our editor Susan Gawarecki at [llamaladysq@yahoo.com](mailto:llamaladysq@yahoo.com) or (865) 494-0102 or mail to 114 Pathfinder Lane, Andersonville, TN 37705.

# 2014 BACKCOUNTRY LLAMA ASSOCIATION PACIFIC NORTHWEST RENDEZVOUS

*By Scott & Gayle Noga, Rattlesnake Ridge Ranch*

The 2014 Backcountry Llama Association Pacific Northwest Rendezvous was for the first time hosted outside of Estacada, Oregon, at the beautiful Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch the last weekend of June. Hidden Oaks Llama Ranch is a 50-acre estate with on-site camping facilities, hiking trails, creek, and lots of llamas. Weather was nice—mostly cloudy and mild—though did display decreasing rain showers leading into it Wednesday through Friday.



Moving the venue each year does provide varied opportunity for new experiences and travel, but does require considerable information gathering and preparation that doesn't carry forward from one year to the next. It is made possible by the many helping hands that prepare for the annual event. Sincere thanks go out to the people willing to contribute the time and effort to help promote the working llama and, as it turned out, to quickly adapt to changing conditions.

With the event officially scheduled to begin on Friday, over thirty people and forty llamas began gathering as early as Wednesday, coming from as far as central California and Montana. With last minute packing our departure was planned for Wednesday morning, but circumstances arose to delay those plans. One of our resident llamas was due to give birth and kept hinting for days beforehand that it was imminent. She waited until early Wednesday morning. Instead of dropping the cria in the pasture as is typical, she decided to do so inside a shelter. Scott found the baby girl crum-

pled in the corner of the shelter behind a fan, unable to move.

Extricating her, she appeared normal except for a limp right rear leg – apparently injured. A vet was summoned as we cared for her. The diagnosis was nerve impingement, possibly accompanied by the effects of temporary circulatory restriction. The cria had considerable difficulty nursing with only three functional legs and required light support of

the knee to provide sufficient stability to dock with the teats. She otherwise appeared healthy and full of vitality and the dam had milk. This would require around-the-clock feeding assistance, which we had to quickly organize among a number of people working in shifts while we were away. With those arrangements made and a follow-up vet check scheduled, we were able to depart Wednesday afternoon.

With two vehicles, a trailer and five llamas, the trip was relatively uneventful. Thursday morning, the plan was for Gayle to spend the day shopping for supplies and setting up while Scott spent the day at Milo McIver Park laying out the courses for the scheduled PLTA pack trials. These plans were thwarted

by a small bee. Gayle, allergic to bee stings, was stung on a finger. After self-medication appeared to be insufficient, her shopping trip, with Sherri Tallman at the helm, diverted to the urgent care clinic. Administered epinephrine, she then had an adverse reaction to the drug, which was later determined to be an overdose for her. Due to the side effects of the treatment, she was transferred to the hospital, transported by Joyce O'Halloran, admitted for the day and overnight. Meanwhile Sherri took the shopping list and tended to the supplies while others, including the youth, assisted in preparing for the influx of attendees. Lisa Wolf arrived Thursday to assist in obstacle creation and course certification.

Friday was pack trial manageability and llama plus gear weigh-ins, leading into the rendezvous kick-off early evening. With 15 llamas registered for trials, this took some time. Reporters from the Estacada News and the Oregonian showed up during the day to gather information, as well as the film

*Continued on page 15*

## 2014 Backcountry Llama Association Pacific Northwest Rendezvous, *continued*

crew for the *Llama Nation* documentary currently in production (see page 18). As is normally the case at rendezvous, there was plenty of good food available with potatoes baked in the wood-fired oven and a variety of toppings and side dishes.

Portable panels were available to contain llamas so they didn't have to be tied out, which a few people took advantage of, as well as a nearby barn. But what's a llama gathering without a little llama excitement? Our four boys included Rowdy the Jailbreaker. In the middle of the night he dislodged a panel and our one intact male Mr. T made it as far as the nearby neighboring pen to serenade the girls within. The three geldings wandered off to find some lush grass to help themselves to. All were easily caught and led back to their pen, now with the interlocking panels also tied together.

Saturday morning, following a hearty breakfast and build-your-own sack lunch, the assemblage relocated itself to the nearby Milo McIver park, which went smoothly. Situated adjacent to the Clackamas River, this 952-acre park includes equestrian trails, amenities and the big "bat barn." Based at the south gazebos, the pack trials got underway without incident and provided the film crew with more footage. The llamas did great. The weather was nice, partly cloudy, no rain and not too hot or cold. Afterwards, there were llamas driving the grounds, a leave-no-trace seminar by Debby Langley-Boyer, PLTA mileage program discussion by Carolyn Mathews, and the introduction and participation in a proposed new PLTA program dubbed the PLTA Challenge, led by Anne Sheeter. It works similarly to a PLTA pack trial except that instead of pass/fail on a fixed length certified course the llama gets points for obstacles (based on difficulty and safe completion) and distance completed on a certified course. It's a less structured trial, sort of a hybridization of the pack trial and the mileage club. Feedback was solicited on how the program should work. There was also discussion of a proposed GeoLlama program—a geocaching program with a twist. You find the hidden geocache treasure or obstacle and can take a picture there with your llama for credit in the program.

Upon return to Hidden Oaks, people eagerly fed the wood fired oven with their self-made personal pizzas, with choice of four doughs, two sauces and many toppings, and just about finished off the homemade root beer. Show-and-tell followed with

creative creations and new backcountry products. Scott also shared information regarding the risk of hemorrhagic diseases in llamas. Time was spent around a large campfire and the youth had fun with the glow sticks and other "toys."

Sunday was a relatively unstructured day that included clean-up and packing for the post-rendezvous pack trip in the nearby Mt. Hood Wilderness area. The post-rendezvous trip is intended to be a relatively easy overnight or multi-day pack experience suitable for less experienced or investigative handlers. Llamas are provided for those without. Eleven people and eleven llamas spent 2-3 days at Twin Lakes. Two new inflatable rafts were packed in so considerable time was spent on the lake. A rope swing is located in a deep section of a lake not far from the camp area



which provided more time in the water. Daytime weather was mostly sunny and in the upper 70's—just about perfect, though the nights cooled down. The water was remarkably warm on the surface, at least near the shoreline.

We would have liked to stay longer but our new cria and work demands required a return home. The trip home was uneventful.

Thanks go out to all the many participants whose continued support makes rendezvous possible. Stay tuned for next year. Also, PLTA pack trials this fall at Cutsforth Park, Oregon is a possibility if enough interest is expressed. Let us know.

Oh, and the cria with the injured leg? Rose Bud is doing just fine now.

# PACK TRIALS FOR EVERYONE: A PROPOSAL

By Lisa Wolf

## The Situation

According to the Articles of Incorporation for the Pack Llama Trial Association (PLTA), the organization was established " ... to provide for the education of the public and members of the association as to breeding, raising, training, care and uses of pack llamas". In order to facilitate this, the founders created the PLTA Pack Trial as a way to "discover and recognize llamas that can fulfill the llama packer's needs on the trail by performing in a manner consistent with the demands of actual packing conditions" (PLTA Handbook, page 4, January 2010 ed.).

The Pack Trial has proven to serve this purpose very well. It not only demonstrates the abilities of a llama, but it encourages people to train llamas appropriately. A llama successfully earning a PLTA certificate has shown that it has acquired appropriate skill in dealing with packing demands, and has an attitude suitable to the venture. It has also shown that it is properly physically conditioned to handle the demands of packing.

Skill is measured by the number and types of obstacles the llama must deal with. Attitude is clearly demonstrated by the llama's willingness to complete the obstacles and the course. Fitness is measured by the llama's ability to complete a specific distance and elevation gain carrying a load. It is this latter aspect of a trial that is addressed here.

## The Need

Over the years we have found that people in areas with little elevation change are not able to hold pack trails because they can't meet the requirements, yet people in the mountainous portions of the country have insisted the standards not be changed since a 'real' pack llama should be able to handle tough country. In my opinion this attitude is elitist and is not pertinent to what the pack trial is intended to reveal. A story a relative of mine told me demonstrates my point. She lives at 6000 feet in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California. Relatives of hers from Florida came to visit. They were people who love the outdoors so she invited them on a four mile hike around a local lake. The visitors struggled mightily to complete the hike. This doesn't seem surprising until one learns that the visitors were marathon runners who regularly compete ... in Florida.

## The Proposal

Now, who would say that the marathon runners weren't fit. They were, but their fitness was appropriate for the environment in which they normally run. I maintain that a pack llama's fitness should be suitable for the environment in which they pack. To say that all pack llamas must be able to handle the type of conditions presented by rugged mountain terrain in order to be considered pack llamas is inappropriate, yet requiring PLTA certified llamas to demonstrate a high level of fitness is appropriate.

To address this situation, I propose we adjust the distance and elevation so that mileage can be increased to replace elevation gain at a factor of 250 feet per mile, and that this increase may be accumulated in quarter mile increments.

So distance/elevation standards would change thusly:

| Trial    | Minimum |           | Adjusted<br>Miles/Elevation  |
|----------|---------|-----------|--|
|          | Miles   | Elevation |  |
| Basic    | 3       | 250       | 4/0  |
| Advanced | 5       | 750       | 6/500, 7/250. 8/0  |
| Master   | 8       | 1500      | 9/1200, 10/750, 11/500, 12/250, 13/0   |
| Extreme  | 10      | 3000      | 11/2750, 12/2500, 13/2250, 14/2000, 15/1750,<br>16/1250, 17/1000, 18/750, 19/500, 20/250, 21/0 |

Continued on page 17

**Pack Trials for Everyone: A Proposal, continued**

The miles and elevation listed in the Minimum column of the above table are the current minimum standards acceptable for a pack trial. Quarter mile increments of 250 feet/mile are: 125 feet/half mile, and 62.5 feet/quarter mile.

In essence nothing has changed in terms of required exertion. This adjustment simply makes it possible for llamas living in flat or rolling landscapes to demonstrate their competence as clearly as those who pack in rugged mountains. This is a fair and reasonable solution to a problem that has excluded many llamas and their owners from participating in PLTA Pack Trials. I propose that the PLTA membership as represented by the Board of Directors change the Pack Trial requirements as recommended here.

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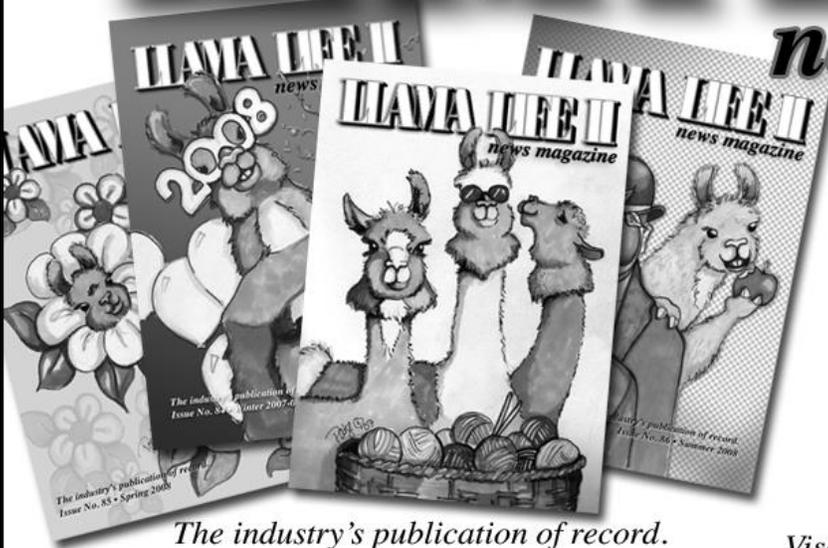
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# A STORY THAT'S SILENTLY BEGGING TO BE TOLD

By Tanner Shinnick

North America is blessed with a vast array of domesticated animals. A relatively recent addition to this group of domesticated animals is llamas. But unfortunately for llamas, the public's first impression generally has not been a favorable one. These impressions have been generally formed by mishaps and unhappy experiences at zoos and county fairs. Also the media's portrayal of llamas has not been accurate to the intelligence and love the llama is capable of. The untold story of the North America llama is a fascinating and touching story of the diverse interactions between the llama and their owners. Much like peeling back each layer of an onion, you soon learn that the llama husbandry is not just a singular activity or event. It is a multiplicity of activities that include husbandry, packing, shows, driving, competition, companionship, parades, therapy and so much more.



This fascinating untold story of the North American llama is the story we now want to introduce to the public. We want to share this singularly unique story through the lives of those who share their lives each and every day with these wonderful, majestic and gentle animals. "Llama Nation: The Documentary" will be the story of both the llamas and the people who share the lives with them in sometimes some very unusual and often entertaining and fun ways.

We, as the filmmakers, see creating this documentary as a group effort with all of you. Through all of your help so far we have found such unique stories that tell the story of llamas in such a beautiful manner. You all can help in your own way. We've had so many of you share with us touching stories and photos. You've welcomed us with open arms to film on your farms, conferences and shows. We've also had many of you help by financially contributing to production cost because, unfortunately, making a film isn't the cheapest thing to do.

We, as a film and production team, firmly believe that we can help change the public's perception of llamas through this exciting new documentary. That is our job for the next year, to film and tell your story about your love and passion for llamas and the llama life. It's a story that has silently been begging to be told for years and we're excited to finally give it the life it has long deserved.

For the remainder of 2014, my production team and I will be flying all around the US and filming many of your unique and fun stories. We've assembled an extremely talented team of Emmy Award winners, producers from PBS documentaries and consultants from Sundance Award Winning documentaries. You may have already had the opportunity to see us at a show or a conference, or hopefully will see us in the near future. We have lots of plans set in place to make this the best story possible. Because let's be honest, it is.

With that in mind, we are offering opportunities to help us in offsetting the production costs of the film. These contributions would go exclusively towards expenses related to flights, food, hotels etc. while we film for the next year. In return for \$125, your name will appear in the credits as special thanks for your help and support of this exciting project. At \$500, your



farm logo and all your important farm information will appear in the credits of the films. If you wish to contribute more, we can discuss individualized plans. Please contact me, Tanner Shinnick, at [tanner-shinnick@gmail.com](mailto:tanner-shinnick@gmail.com) for more information.

The Documentary will finish filming the end of 2014 and will then begin entering film festivals around the nation in 2015. We've already been granted an early admission to the Sun Valley Film Festival for 2015 and foresee participating in many festivals around the nation next year. The reception during early stages of the film have been exceptional. We owe all of that to you. You all have been so great with us through this process so far. Thank you.

If you would like to keep up on where we'll be filming and what we've filmed you can follow us on our Facebook account at [facebook.com/llamanationfilm](https://www.facebook.com/llamanationfilm) on Instagram [@llamanationfilm](https://www.instagram.com/llamanationfilm) or our website at [llamanationfilm.com](http://llamanationfilm.com).

Thank you all for being so welcoming to myself and production crew as we travel along this journey. It's been a joy so far this year and we're beyond excited to continue on.

*This article originally appeared in the Spring 2014 SSLA Llama Journal.*