



Newsletter of the

# BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Volume 28, No 2

March 2008

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The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is a member of The Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition.

**SEFTC**

Jeffery Hunter, currently American Hiking Society Director of SEFC is leaving this job by the end of the month to accept a position with the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition as Wilderness Campaign Organizer for SE TN.

## Section Maintainers Recognized by Tellico Ranger District

Ken Jones, Tellico Ranger District Trail Volunteer Coordinator

The Tellico Ranger District has just finished placing new decals on the carsonite posts located at many of the trail heads on the Benton MacKaye Trail. These decals recognize the trail maintainers by name, and list the miles of trail that have been adopted. It is hoped that this action will provide much needed recognition to those maintainers who have taken on long sections to try to keep them in good shape for all trail users. It is interesting to note that the average length of these sections is 6.7 miles per maintainer, and includes mostly wilderness trail mileage. The section maintainers so recognized are Doug McPherson, Ken Jones, Kent and Pam Mathews, Betty Petty, and Steve Cartwright. It is hoped that this recognition will instill a pride of ownership in each maintainer, resulting in a renewed dedication to make their section the best on the BMT. I will gladly assist anyone in working on their sections in the District, so do not hesitate to call on me. - Ken Jones

## Dues are Due and the BMTA Needs You!

Ken Jones, Membership Chair

The new membership year has started, and the BMTA needs your support now more than ever. The entire BMT was completed over 2 1/2 years ago, and we still have some sections in the middle that have not received any maintenance since well before the start of construction. Your continued support as a member is needed so that the organization can continue to focus on maintaining and protecting our fantastic resource for hikers. Please take the time to renew your membership today by mailing in your dues for 2008.

## BMTA Officers

President: ..... Betty J. Petty  
Vice President: ..... Ralph Heller  
Secretary: ..... vacant  
GA Maintenance: ..... Tom Keene  
TN/NC Maintenance: ..... Eric Eades  
Smokies Maint.: ..... Jim Lumpkins  
Construction: ..... George Owen  
Recreation: ..... Bob Ruby  
Membership: ..... Ken Jones  
Treasurer: ..... Darcy Douglas  
Publicity: ..... Kevin O'Quinn  
Newsletter Editor: ..... vacant  
Conservation: ..... vacant  
Past Pres.: ..... Steve Cartwright  
State Rep. - GA: ..... Walt Cook  
State Rep. - TN: ..... Linda Davis  
State Rep. - NC: ..... Dan Muse  
Standing Committee Chairs  
Corridor Protection: ..... George Owen  
Bylaws Revision: ..... Tom Keene

## Memorial Hike in Blairsville, January 20, 2008



Members of the BMTA attended and participated in the memorial hike held on January 20 in Blairsville GA to honor the memory of Miss Meredith Emerson, a student from the University of Georgia. According to Jessica Jordan of the Gainesville Times, there were approximately 150 people and 50 dogs in attendance. Members of the hiking community made their presence known. Union County Sheriff Scott Stephens attended the memorial hike and said the event originally was planned to take place at Blood Mountain, but the threat of icy roads moved the hike to a more accommodating location. Organizers also said that the expected crowd forced the move to a location with more parking.

Stephens said the Union County Commission temporarily repealed the ban on dogs at the park to allow supporters of Emerson to honor her memory. One attendee was the BMTA's very own Roger Neilsen. Roger submitted his account of the even in a letter to the newsletter below:

*Folks, I don't know how closely you've followed the kidnapping and murder of hiker Meredith Emerson by what seems to be a serial killer who preyed on hikers. I've had reporters at our paper cover it quite a bit because she was a University of Georgia graduate (her funeral service was in Athens).*

*Ms. Emerson was 24, and was hiking on New Year's Day with her dog on the 1.8-mile Freeman Trail near Blood Mountain when she disappeared. Her car was found nearby in the Byron Herbert Reece trail head parking area near Neels Gap, where the Mountain Crossings backpacking outfitter occupies the only building that the Appalachian Trail goes through on its 2,175-mile route from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. Her body was found about 30 miles away in a forested state wildlife management area. The hiking community held a memorial this morning outside Blairsville, which is about 15 miles*

*north of Blood Mountain and a two-hour drive from Athens over the mountains. It was quite moving, even to a crusty old joe like me.*

*About 200 people showed up in Meeks Park at 10 a.m. in 14-degree weather. We stood around trampling a dusting of snow for 30 minutes or so while others trickled in. Then, two of Emerson's friends and their dogs led us on a mile-long hike around the park, which sits in the shallow valley of a creek at its confluence with the Nottely River. After the hike, both friends spoke, as did Winton Porter, owner of Mountain Crossings (he was the main organizer). A full-blooded Cherokee also gave a brief talk (reminding us that we were on HIS land), then performed a "smudge ceremony" where you wash your face and head with herbal smoke to rinse away bad spirits.*

*One of Emerson's friends remembered last summer when she called him late one afternoon and urged him to head to the mountains with her for a hike. He said he was reluctant to go because the afternoon thunderstorms were already building up, but she told him, "You'll be glad you went once you get to the other side." Sniff.*

*One reason I went is because I'm very familiar with the area where Emerson disappeared. I park frequently at the Reece lot, from which you can make a 6-mile loop hike over Blood Mountain on the AT and come back via the Freeman Trail where she was last seen, and I stop into Mountain Crossings enough that Porter recognized my face. The guy charged with killing Emerson is also thought to be the guy who killed an 84-year-old woman hiker in October near North Carolina's Shining Rock Wilderness Area, where I hike frequently. (That woman's 80-year-old husband is still missing.)*

*Bad craziness out there, but there's still lots of good in the world. - Roger*

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## The BMTA 2007 Annual Meeting

By Betty Petty

The BMTA Annual Meeting for 2007 was held at the UGA Mountain Experimental Station on Nov 3, 2007. An entertaining and informative program was presented by Bob Williams, a newsman with a history of editorships at a number of newspapers both large and small. There were lifetime service awards for Wade Harper, long time newsletter editor and John Dowling, long time Treasurer of the BMTA. Then the 'Golden Pulaski' award for Maintainer of the Year was presented to Ken Jones.

The accomplishments of the year were highlighted with reports of the reroutes done and in progress, the news articles that appeared in the Atlanta Constitution and the New York Times, the resolution of the Road To Nowhere problem and the annual walk-thru. Some challenges for the coming year presented were the elimination of the road walks, continuing need for more maintenance efforts, recruitment of more members/volunteers and the rising Corridor K problem which threatens the mid-section of the trail.

Prior to the annual meeting, Bill Ristom proposed a set of bylaw changes which he distributed to the board. This proposed set of bylaws was published both in the newsletter and on the website. They were to have been reviewed by the board prior to the annual meeting, but the last scheduled board meeting did not occur because of a failure to reach a quorum to conduct business. Because of this and because of the strenuous objections by several members to certain of the changes proposed, I decided to withdraw these from presentation to the whole membership until they could be further studied in committee and by the board.

Election of officers also takes place at the annual meeting. The nominating committee is charged with making nominations to the board after obtaining consent from those individuals nominated. Bill Ristom was chair of this committee with Steve Cartwright and George Owen serving as the other two members. A slate of officers was presented by the committee with one vacancy, Publicity Director, for which a candidate had not been found. The night before the meeting one of the nominees called me and withdrew his nomination for Membership Chair leaving two vacancies on the slate.

Before the meeting two longtime members volunteered to submit their names for consideration for board positions. However both of them were reluctant to take the Publicity Director position and the member nominated for Treasurer had been interested in that position and agreed to be nominated for that position. These two longtime members were nominations from the floor. There was the opportunity for other persons to nominate additional candidates from the floor for any office. None did. The Ristoms were both re-elected to their board positions despite not attending the meeting.

**2008 WALK-THROUGH SET FOR APRIL 26**

**Sign up NOW**

Spring wildflowers for everyone!

A late April date for the annual walk-through will assure the trail is ship-shape for the prime spring hiking season. It will also provide a great chance for participants to get out and enjoy the early spring wildflowers.

These were among the key reasons that the BMTA Board voted to shift the 2006 walk-through to April. Walk-through coordinators are the BMT maintenance directors: Tom Keene for the GA sections of the trail, and Eric Eades for TN/NC sections. No walk-through activity is planned for the North (Smokies) sections; the National Park Service maintains the trails in the Smokies.

The walk-through coordinators will assign a pair of hikers (for safety) to walk every section of the trail and to note the trail's condition, including any maintenance needs. Those who do not want to walk, can join us for breakfast and help as shuttle drivers.

About 4:00 PM many of the participants in Georgia will converge at the Pink Pig to share results and their tales of high adventure. Hikers in Tennessee and North Carolina will meet at restaurant(s) TBA by Eric Eades. Written reports will go to Tom and Eric, so they can plan future work-trips.

ACT NOW to participate in the April 26 walk-through. Grab a partner and for TN/NC contact Eric Eades (706-226-7791 or dawg1980@hotmail.com), or for GA contact Tom Keene (770-422-4838 or

[tkenee@kennesaw.edu](mailto:tkenee@kennesaw.edu)). Indicate a section you prefer to walk, or just volunteer "as needed." (Remember that maintainers may NOT walk their own sections.)

Or volunteer to shuttle walkers. Shuttle drivers are a huge help. Several breakfast meeting places will be used depending on the location you walk. For details, ask Eric or Tom when you contact them. Join us!

**BMTA Membership/Donation Form**

Please enter this Benton MacKaye Trail Assn membership/renewal:

Individual, 1 Yr. \$20     Family, 1 Yr. \$30     Student/Retired, 1 Yr. \$15

Corporate, 1 Yr. \$50     Life Membership \$400

Name(s) .....

Address .....

City .....

State .....

Zip .....

Telephone(s) (tel) .....

eMail .....

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**Eleven Start Final Reroute Section** by George Owen

Eleven stalwart folks showed up for the chilly Saturday of February 23 to spend hours on a hillside digging the start of the final of four major legs in the Licklog-Wallalah BMT reroute in Georgia.

The morning began with much of the group gathering for the traditional breakfast at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. Tom Keene, co-leader, showed up with the tools but then excused himself as he was under the weather with a bad cold and behind in grading class papers for his university. So instead of a "dirty dozen," we were to be an "elite eleven."

Some folks had said they were tired of climbing over Wallalah Mountain for much of the last year in all this reroute work, so we met at Skeenah Gap at 9:00 to hike up Rhodes Mountain then over to the work site on the west upper face of Licklog Mountain. On the way in we met and visited with some folks with the maintaining crew camping out in the swag between the two mountains.

Then it was to work. Eight of us labored all day on the upper part of the top final reroute on Licklog Mountain. Walt Cook took two others to go below to the last reroute near the giant yellow poplar to improve and complete the labor needed there. We were all in cloud all day, but without rain. It was so chilly at lunch that we hurried our meals to return to work and thereby warm up. At 3:00 p.m. we ceased working and began the trek out, soon meeting the two crews together before the final topping of Licklog and the long trip downhill. Several in the group completed the day eating at the famous Pink Pig.

The lower great switchback on Licklog is complete now, joining with the two on Wallalah finished in 2007. All that remains is about two-thirds of the upper relocation of Licklog, which we hope to finish in work trips between now and summer.

The next construction trip on Licklog is Saturday, March 22. Breakfast is again at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 a.m.

Finally, I wish to thank the eleven who came out for the February Georgia work trip. It was a special treat to have with us Dwight Kay's son Thomas Kay (a student at Kennesaw State University) and to have back on these trips our former vice president of BMTA, Bill Ross.

Our crew: David Blount, Wes Clonts, Walt Cook, Darcy Douglas, Ralph Heller, Dwight Kay, Thomas Kay, Doug Kleiber, George Owen, Bill Ross, and Bob Ruby.

**HOURS WORKED: 73 HOURS TRAVELED: 36**

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**BENTON MacKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION**

Report of Volunteer Trail Work

Date of Work: 01/12/08  
 Location: Sandy Gap - Round Top, State Line (BMT Section No. 16a)  
 Type: Monthly Work Trip, January  
 Ref. BMTA Work Trip No.: 252  
 Description of Work Done: 900 feet of Treadway sidehilled

Volunteer	Work Hrs	Travel Hrs	Total Hrs
Eric Eades	5.5	5.5	11.0
Darcy Douglas	5.5	6.0	11.0
David Blount	5.5	6.0	11.0
Steve Cartwright	5.5	3.0	8.5
Betty J. Petty	5.5	3.5	9.0
Bill Lundin	5.5	5.5	11.0
<b>Total hours :</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>61.5</b>

Maintainer's Comments:

There is a 12" diameter blowdown located about 20 minutes walk from Sandy Gap. We did not attempt to remove this blowdown, but it should be removed as soon as possible.

The rough road walk that proceeds south (north as the trail goes) was a bit too bad to accommodate the vehicles that we brought up to the gap. Tools in hand, we set off for Moss Gap, where the plan of side hilling was to occur. Section 16a has only this area of side hill trail construction, but some years of illegal horse use had rendered the treadway there to two levels. Of the 500 yards of trail leading in to Moss Gap, easily 300 yards needed work, and the 6 of us got it done by quitting time!

**Testimony in Congress on ORV Abuse of Public Lands**

**Jack Gregory**, Special Agent In Charge, Southern Region, retired testified before the **House Natural Resources Committee** on March 13 on the impacts of off Road vehicles (ORV) on public lands. He made three points - 1) the ORV problem is getting steadily worse, 2) the ORV problem is not just a "few bad apples" but rather a breakdown in attitude from a high percentage of ORV users, 3) route designation without enforcement will not work.

In addition to the obvious damage to the ecosystem and the danger posed to other forest users by drunk, unruly riders on occasion, there is also the danger of hot mufflers and sparks triggering forest fires. Among his examples of ORV abuse was one from our area, the **Tellico ORV area**. It is described in a popular ORV website: "You will see a lot of local rigs here with 300 Horsepower and tires in the 40"+ range. These big rigs are what keep our trails interesting. When they "hammer down" they move large quantities of rock and dirt, so the trails are in a constant state of change."...Known as Hard Rock going up, and Slick Rock coming down, either way, this trail provides plenty of excitement. The approach to the rock runs right up a creek bed with lots of big, loose muddy boulders that get shifted around each time someone goes up." Also on this website is the 'Tread Lightly, Leave a Good Impression' logo lately adopted by the ORV manufacturers.

This area was a quiet fishing destination prior to the opening of the ORV area with a healthy population of native brook trout. Now the trout are gone and those in the Tellico River are threatened by the muddy runoff from this area. It has also become a problem for FS Law Enforcement (LE). In one shift recently an LEO wrote 125 violation citations and seized over 300 containers of alcohol.

This edition of the BMTA Newsletter compiled and edited by Betty Petty. A new editor will be appointed at the March 5 board meeting.