



Newsletter of the

BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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June 2009

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BMTA Officers

President: Ralph Heller
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TN/NC Maintenance:..Richard Harris
Smokies Maint.: Dick Evans
Construction:Eric Eades
Membership:Bill Hamrick
Publicity:.....Jeff Hunter
Hiking Director.....Bob Ruby
Newsletter Editor.....Betty Petty
Conservation:Denny Rhodes
Past Pres.: Steve Cartwright
State Rep. - GA: Walt Cook
State Rep. - TN:Ken Jones
State Rep. - NC: Butch Horn

June Calendar

June 6 - Trails Day WALK-THRU

June 13 - GA Maint. - Tom Keene
770-422-4838

June 20 - Quarterly Board Meeting

June 26 - Land Managers Meeting

June 27 - TN/NC Maint. - Rick
Harris 423-353-6368

July 18 - GA BMTA/FS Work Trip

Our annual swing blade fiesta with the Forest Service. Hikers, horses, hardhats! We will meet the FS at Dally Gap at 9:00. BMTA workers will meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge around 8:00 for breakfast; carpools depart by 8:30. For more information or with other questions please call the trip leader, Bill Ross, at 404-234-6488.

Dozen BMTAers Attend SEFTC Meet in Kentucky by George Owen

Twelve members of our association attended the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC) biennial conference at Pine Mountain State Resort Park in southeastern Kentucky May 7-10.

This event featured activities in both the state park and nearby Cumberland Gap National Historical Park.

Several of the members went up early in the week to participate in some area hikes led by George Owen. Others came later for the official meeting. We believe the BMTA had the best representation over seventy people from regional hiking trail clubs attending the conference.

On Saturday, May 9, the formal business meeting of the conference was held which resulted in BMTA's Rick Harris being re-elected to the SEFTC board. Two other BMTAers were also elected to the board: Darcy Douglas and George Owen. Betty Petty is on standby as a potential board member also if any existing member drops out. Jeffrey Hunter continues as the general representative to the SEFTC from BMTA.

Numerous workshops were held with our various BMTA members attending. Most of our folks also managed during the week to hike over famed Cumberland Gap, associated with Daniel Boone during the founding days of our country. Various points of interest were part of other hikes, including a bit of the Cumberland Trail, the national park's Ridge Trail, Tri-State Peak (where one can stand in the three states of KY, TN, VA at one time), Pinnacle Overlook, Gap Cave, etc.

A week of much daily rain forced readjustments in our outdoor plans, including hikes. The conference concluding event, scheduled to be a cookout on Saturday evening at remote Hensley Settlement in the national park, had to be relocated to the more accessible Civic Park in the northeast corner of the park because of wet roads and rain threats.

The next full-membership meeting of the SEFTC will be in 2010 instead of 2011. This is in attempt to remove the SEFTC conference from convening the same years as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy conference. Thus SEFTC conferences are now projected for even-numbered years: 2010, 2012, 2014, etc. A place has been tentatively proposed with plans to visit the site further and announce the location in the near future.

There has now been a decade of SEFTC conferences; the founding such event was at Unicoi State Park in Georgia. Both there and in all subsequent conferences the BMTA has always been well represented, often competing with the Florida Trail Association for most club attendees.

BMTAers attending the meeting were: Marty Dominy, Darcy Douglas, Brenda Harris, Rick Harris, Jeffrey Hunter, George Owen, Betty Petty, Denny Rhodes, Nancy Shofner, Morgan Sommerville, Pam Sullivan, and Richard Sullivan.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) on the BMT

By Liz Burlingame and Eric Eades

For anyone who has recently hiked in the North Georgia mountains and noticed a spidery web clinging to the hemlock trees, you have witnessed first-hand the infestation of the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). The HWA has been decimating hemlocks all along the eastern seaboard and was discovered in Georgia in 2002. An introduced pest from Japan, the HWA feeds on the sap of the hemlocks, robbing them of nutrients and killing the trees within only a few years. The Forest Service estimates that, if left unchecked, the HWA will decimate 90% of the native hemlock trees with five to ten years.^[1] The BMTA is launching an effort to assess the damage done by the newly arrived adelgid and to formulate a plan to inoculate at least some of the hemlocks along the Benton MacKaye Trail. It's a daunting task.

There are basically four types of chemical application methods that have proven effective in controlling the spread of the HWA. There is an insecticidal spray which is applied directly to the infected boughs. A soil injection method uses either a liquid or granular insecticide that is spread into the soil. Lastly, there is a stem, or "sapstream" injection that delivers insecticide into the trunk of the infected tree where the insecticide is absorbed directly beneath the bark. Certification and training is needed for this method, and it was used in some selected areas by Forest Service personnel this past spring. In addition to chemical insecticides, there is a biological method which employs the release of non-native predatory beetles. These beetles (*Sasajiscymnus tsugae*), feed exclusively on the adelgid. Currently, three universities in Georgia are rearing these beetles in specially designed labs, and already thousands have been released into area forests.

The first step for the BMTA will be to inventory the hemlocks along the trail and the upcoming June 6 walk-through offers a perfect time to do just that. By collecting data on the existing hemlocks, the BMTA will be able to determine which stands of hemlocks make the best candidates for inoculation.

Already, the U.S. Forest Service has begun to treat hemlocks both in the Blue Ridge and Conasauga Ranger Districts which includes sections of the BMT. (See the Forest Service HWA Environmental Assessment at <http://www.fs.fed.us/conf/sopa/forest-health-nepa.htm>.) The BMTA would like to participate in the eradication effort along our trail, but first there must be approval from, and then coordination with, the FS to insure there is no conflict or duplication of our collective efforts.

Trained volunteers may be needed in the future, but first things first; we need volunteers to help survey, count, and provide a location on the trail during our upcoming walk-through. Stay tuned to the newsletter for updates and the opportunity to really make a difference.

Geographic Maps Out for Chattahoochee Forest

By George Owen

The first-ever National Geographic Trails Illustrated maps of the Chattahoochee National Forest arrived at outdoor stores and other outlets in later April.

There are two maps, numbers 777 and 778. Number 777 entitled "Springer and Cohutta Mountains" covers the forest from Chatsworth, GA eastward to the Brasstown Wilderness east of Blairsville. Map 778, "Brasstown Bald/Chattooga River," begins at Blairsville and moves eastward across the South Carolina state line to include a good portion of the Sumter National Forest. Thus with both maps all the Chattahoochee National Forest is covered except the separate portion in northwest Georgia west of Dalton and I-75.

Since the new official Chattahoochee National Forest management map which came out earlier this decade now omits most trails except for long-distance ones, mainly interstate trails, we in the (continued pg 3)

TN/NC Work Trip

April. 25, 2009

by Rick Harris

We cleared **BMT Section 19c** of trees across the trail and brushed out the trail from the Little T to the top of the ridgeline, about a half mile from where the trail joins the Alcoa service road. Four hardy workers participated in the work trip: Rick Harris, Ken Jones and Joy Benn. Joy lives just minutes from the trailhead. Dick Evans met us at the trailhead by the dam, but could not work since he was caring for his grandchildren while his wife cooked food with ramps for the ramp festival. Thus we have a little work left to do, but we can take care of this easily on another day. The trail is in excellent condition except for a few short areas where the sidehilling needs to be reworked. There was one huge tree which fell across the trail at the top of the ridge. We cleared what we could and routed the trail under the trunk of the tree. We need to go back and reroute the trail around the base of this humongous hardwood for safety of the hikers. This would be easy to do with a little brush cutting.

Work Hrs: 18.5 Total Hrs: 26



IS THE BMTA GOING ALL OUT TO MAKE ITS TRAIL THE MOST COMFORTABLE?

While hiking on Section 6D, close to a tributary of Laurel Creek, President Ralph Heller and his wife, Marge came upon a white, wooden chair (from some unknown donor) positioned just under a tree, with the BMT blaze. The chair came in handy for boot tying that day!



President's Corner

by Ralph Heller

As a volunteer organization, we have spent many hours planning and building the Benton MacKaye Trail. I have multiple boxes of records which go back to the time the BMTA was established back in 1980. It was interesting to review these records to get an idea of the time and effort required to build our 288-mile trail.

Countless hours were spent planning the general route of the trail. Then the actual path of the trail had to be created by first walking through the forests to discover the best routing, taking into consideration the grade and natural barriers. Every foot of trail had to be coordinated with, and approved by, our Forest Service partners. Studies had to be made to ensure that we did not impact endangered species or archeological sites.

After the trail locations were approved, the actual route had to be flagged, and then work could commence to clear the path, sidehill sloped areas, create waterbars, and build stone steps in steep grades. Through the years we have rerouted trails to improve them. The reroutes also required an approval process. The BMT after thousands of volunteer hours was finally completed all the way to Davenport Gap in 2005. In 2010 we will celebrate our thirtieth anniversary.

As we hike a well-maintained section of trail, let us reflect on the dedicated volunteers who worked on it past and present. Volunteers are the lifeline of our organization. Without them, the BMTA could not exist. Opportunities to volunteer are numerous. In addition to trail work, we have the need for non-board members to participate in committees. We have communication, long-term planning, and corridor protection committees. We need some new volunteers to go out on maintenance work trips. There is a need for more people to be certified for chainsaw and crosscut saw use. Our hiking director can always use more volunteers to lead fun hikes. We need persons to help with membership and publicity. That includes working a booth in an event in which the BMTA participates. Our conservation director Denny Rhodes could use some help. Currently we are involved in a project monitoring stream quality in the Three Forks area. And we want to be involved in hemlock woolly adelgid control along our trail. See the article on the adelgids in this issue.

I would like to see more of our members submit articles for this newsletter. One idea is for section maintainers to give reports on their section. We could have a different section in each newsletter. Information reported could be flora and fauna sighted along the trail and interesting features. The report could include the number of people met on the trail, where they were from, and how they heard about the BMT. Currently, we have a need for a person who is experienced in web development and design. With our variety of talented members, I am sure we have some persons who could easily perform this function. See the information on what is required in another section of this issue.

To volunteer, go to the BMTA web page www.bmta.org and select the "Contact" tab. Fill out the pertinent information and indicate where you would like to volunteer. We will be pleased to contact you.

New Chattahoochee Maps (continued from pg 2) hiking community have been hampered by the lack of a central map system for trekking information in North Georgia. The new Geographic maps remedy that problem. As with most other Geographic Trails Illustrated maps, these two of the Chattahoochee list not only hiking trails, but also those for horse, bike, and atv/orv use. Charts are included indicating trail Forest Service number designations, trail name, location, length, distance, difficulty rating, and use. The long-distance interstate trails are all highlighted: the Benton MacKaye, Bartram, and Pinhoti trails in yellow; the Appalachian Trail in green. Map 777, "Springer & Cohutta Mountains," now gives us one convenient source of the entire BMT in Georgia. It's highlighted in yellow and our official forest trail designation number "2" is found along the entire route from Springer Mountain into the Big Frog Wilderness in Tennessee. The maps are available at your outdoor stores in Georgia for \$11.95 each plus tax. You may also order them from National Geographic Maps, P. O. Box 4357, Evergreen, CO or 800-962-1643.

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) (1st)

Telephone(s) (2nd)

eMail

Please send me the e-Newsletter

Please don't list my contact info in the annual membership roster.

It's OK to share my contact info with sister trail organizations.

Interested in helping with: Trail Work Fun Hikes Mgmt/Officer

Administrative Newsletter Adopting a Section of Trail

I wish to make a tax-deductible donation in the amount of \$.....

Gift Membership given by: name..... eMail.....

address/phone

Mail to: Benton MacKaye Trail Assn ♦ PO Box 53271 ♦ Atlanta, GA 30355-1271



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Adopt-A-Stream Program Launched By Denny Rhodes

BMTA is now recognized as a monitoring group in Georgia 's Department of Natural Resources Adopt-A-Stream Program. On May 16, 2009, Darcy Douglas and Denny Rhodes, joined by Laura and Sarah Northrop, conducted biological, chemical and physical tests at sites along Long and Stover Creeks. All four became certified by DNR in March as QA/QC monitors for chemical and physical testing, and the Northrops also received biological certification.

Testing was for air and water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH (the measure of acidity), and conductivity (a general measure of dissolved solids in water). Darcy and Denny did that on Long and Stover Creeks, while Laura and Sarah inventoried Long creek for macro invertebrates. The latter, more tedious task identified eight species, three of which are considered sensitive to oxygen levels and contaminates.

A Trout Unlimited group and Jim Wentworth, the biologist on the Blue Ridge Ranger District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest , were at work that day on a brook trout habitat project on Stover Creek. We visited with them briefly, and they showed interest in what we were doing. Their project and ours may dovetail together very well. Sarah Northrop is a Junior Girl Scout. This effort satisfied the last requirements for the Bronze Award, the highest achievement at her level of

of scouting, and the first step towards the very highest award overall.

We are seeking volunteers to join us. The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club is currently monitoring hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) at selected predatory beetle release sites in the same area. Our intent is to merge both of our activities so as to have a single joint effort to collect information about the health of this eastern hemlock forest, while it is under the pressure of HWA infestation. Hopes are to add bacterial testing, requiring separate certification, by year's end. If you are interested in any of this, contact Denny Rhodes at 770-435-3445 or dennyrhodes@charter.net.

Web Development Volunteer Needed

We are looking for someone among our talented members who is able to perform some web development/design work. The person who was doing this work has moved on to other commitments, so this much needed position is now open. At present, we are able to add or modify textual information to our web pages, but we need someone who can modify and enhance our current web page layout. This person would need to have MySQL database, PHP scripting, and HTML authoring experience using CSS.

If you are interested, please notify us by using our web site www.bmta.org and selecting the "Contact" tab. On the "Contact Us" page, fill out the pertinent information lines, indicating your desire to volunteer for this position and your experience. We will get back to you.