

Newsletter of the

Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Inc.

PO Box 6

Cherry Log, GA

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Work Trip Reports

“Leaving a footpath for generations to follow.”



Due in part to the lack of a Newsletter in January, we have a lot of work trips to report, so they are in separate parts of the Newsletter this month.

Georgia Trail Maintenance by Ralph Heller Immediate Past President BMTA.

I want to thank all of our volunteers who maintain sections of the BMT from Springer Mountain to the Smokies. I am temporarily performing the function of GA Maintenance Director until we can fill this vacant position. The first thing I have done is to make sure that our records are correct as to who is maintaining each section. I have asked each maintainer to hike their section and send an evaluation of his/her section in the next few months. They will let me know whether they need help with such maintenance requirements such as blowdowns, sidehilling, water bars or other items which usually need attention on a monthly work trip.

Another area that I would like to improve is the trail work and condition reporting procedure. I am working on creating a computer database, data entry, and report procedure for keeping track of work done and the condition of our trail sections. With this system, using input from maintainers, work trips and reports from hikers, we can pinpoint sections of the trail that need maintenance work. We will also be able to send better reports to the Forest Service, not only of trail condition, but hours worked on the Blue Ridge and Conasauga Districts. This database will be able to create reports showing the total hours worked by each section maintainer and persons participating in work trips. Once the information has been entered in the database, it will be a very simple procedure to generate the different reports needed or create a special report. **This is very important!** The Forest Service uses this information for reports they create on work done in their districts by volunteers. An added bonus for us is that volunteer time is tracked by the Forest Service, and those folks on record are eligible for nice awards for their volunteer time, such as tee shirts, caps, and other recognitions.

To make this system work, we need to send us reports on trail work and conditions. Maintainers need to send in the BMTA Section Maintainer Report, a copy of which can be found in the Maintainer section of the BMTA web site. Directions for sending in the report are on the form. As acting Maintenance Director, I will be the person to whom the reports should be sent. Work Trip Leaders use the Trip Leader signup sheets to report work done and work needed. Finally, anyone hiking the trail may report conditions on the Contact Us section of the web site.

We still need to have maintainers for four trail sections in Georgia, Section 2b (No Name Gap>Bryson Gap), Section 7a (Weaver/Laurel Creek Rd>Hwy 515), Section 07d (Boardtown Road>Bushy Head Gap), and Section 08a (Bushy Head Gap>Hudson Gap). Sections 07a and 07d are road walks and only require trash pickup and occasional blaze refreshing.

Let's have all sections the trail in good condition by the time of the walk-thru later in the year. If you have questions or want to be assigned a section call or email me at 770-235-9760 or rshatl@etcm.com. I want to thank everyone who came out on last month's work trip. It was really nice to see some of our new members participate.

September Georgia Work Trip By George Owen, GA Maintenance Director

The September 11 Georgia work trip brought us both continuing summer warmth and one of our best regular monthly maintenance trip turnouts of the year with eleven showing up.

Breakfast, as usual, was at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. Then it was off to begin work at Halloway Gap.

This day we had an advantage the Forest Service has agreed to for the first time since original construction in the area. Yes, we now had a key to the gate near the summit of Flat Top Mountain, allowing us to continue on the Forest Service Road to Double Hogpen Gap, thus eliminating 1.5 mile of road walk each way. This meant we began work about 45 minutes sooner. (Regretfully, Doug Kleiber had his vehicle hung up on a road bulge at

Double Hogpen, doing some damage to his “running board.” We spent some time working to free the vehicle from this situation.)

Now, mid-morning, it was first to work on the re-clearing and widening of the sidehill on the north slope into Holloway Gap. This was a much-needed improvement to the relocated sidehill into the gap laid out some years ago by Marty Dominy. Meanwhile, Tom Keene and Gerrit Voogt took off to finish brushing out a portion of the trail just north of Fowler Mountain’s summit. After lunch some of us worked a bit improving the sidehill on the south slope of Holloway Gap.

EXCITEMENT! Claire Broadwell, lopping in front of the sidehillers, spotted – just in time – a big, thick ol’ timber rattler in the trail as she approached the gap. We all rushed down to see the legless gentleman as he swished off the trail into the underbrush just to our right. Since he did not have the slightest inclination to move further from the trail than a foot or two from the trail treadway, we all carefully passed him on the opposite side as far into the left side bushes as possible. (Ah, such memories of trail work days!)

After lunch we worked until mid-afternoon, then returned to our vehicles at Double Hogpen Gap, having done our duty. Now the trail was ready for those intrepid hikers who dare tackle this most remote 13-mile section of the Benton MacKaye Trail in Georgia. A BIG THANKS goes out to all who worked on this re-clearing and sidehilling project. Yes, another BMT trip enters the record book of our successes.

Two final notes: 1) It was great to have three women with us on this trip; I was beginning to get a complex that women hated me! 2) Some of us perfected the outing by eating at the Pink Pig afterwards.

PARTICIPANTS: Jerry Bland, Sara Bland, Claire Broadwell, Wes Clonts, Walt Cook, Jay M. Dement, Darcy Douglas, Tom Keene, Doug Kleiber, George Owen, Gerrit Voogt

HOURS WORKED: 62 HOURS TRAVELED: 37

October Georgia Work Trip: Wallalah/Licklog Again *By George Owen, GA Maintenance Director*

Small children in their games love repetition. We Georgia BMTAers must be playing a game with Wallalah and Licklog mountains – we certain return there a lot. Thus it was that on the Georgia October 9 work trip it was back to that familiar section to clear summer growth and chainsaw some down trees.

The day also began in a usual way: breakfast together at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. Then it was off to eventually end up parking on that piece of secret high private property we have permission to use occasionally on the side of Wallalah Mountain that eliminates a mile uphill trek to arrive at the work site.

Six of us worked to clear from the Wallalah overlook to within a few hundred yards of the summit of Licklog Mountain, mostly lopping and slingblading. Newly certified chainsawyer Josh Chastain, spent several hours clearing down timber, with his future father-in-law Ralph Heller (BMTA president) as his helper. (When you read this, you can take “future” out of that last sentence. Josh is now happily married to Ralph’s daughter, Jennifer. The wedding was October 16. Congratulations!)

So now this route between the two highest peaks on the BMT’s most difficult section in Georgia to hike is all clear. We thank the six who gave their day to make this possible.

PARTICIPANTS: Josh Chastain, David Dunn, Vic Fredlund, Ralph Heller, George Owen, Jack Peebles

WORK HOURS: 34 TRAVEL HOURS: 12

Dec. GA Maintenance Trip Trail Section for Sale – Free! Cleared and Ready for You

George Owen, Reporting

Ever thought of having your own section of the Benton MacKaye Trail? One of the few sections road on each end is all cleared now and ready for you. Contact Ralph Heller if interested.

Yes, this is the 2.6-mile section between Bushyhead Gap and Hudson Gap – you can drive right to either. This section 08a has not had a maintainer for some months, and was also filled with downfalls from storms and a recent forest fire.

Yet this section was just cleared by the Georgia maintenance crew of eleven on December 11. Some sidehill improvements were included. Workers met either at the Ellijay Waffle King for breakfast or the new Cherry Log Christian Church that morning, and soon were working on the section. We especially appreciate the heavy duty work of chainsawyers Bob Ruby and Richard Sullivan in clearing downed tree trunks, branches, and crowns. Walt Cook repainted and added a number of blazes.

The remainder of us lopped, slingbladed, and sidehilled. We finished work and returned to our vehicles by 2:30, a little early, in order for those of us who could to attend a 70th birthday celebration for Ralph Heller thrown by his wife Marge and family at the Heller home in Cherry Log.

We welcomed back to the group Susan Powell who worked with us once before a year or two ago. She has done the entire Appalachian Trail and was the paid ridgerunner for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in the Smokies last year. Welcome back, Susan.

Work Crew: Steve Bayliss, David Blount, Wes Clonts, Walt Cook, Ralph Heller, Joe Kinard, Doug Kleiber, George Owen, Susan Powell, Bob Ruby, Richard Sullivan

Hours Worked: 57

Hours Traveled: 36

Georgia Work Trip – January 8, 2011 by David Blount.

The first Georgia work trip for 2011 was a safe and productive success! Facing cold temperatures in the 20's and 30's and forewarned that snow and ice would strike the state the following evening, ten hardy souls chose to brave the winter elements and spend a day working in the woods. Starting the day in Blue Ridge with a hearty breakfast buffet, we next carpooled to the trail head on Weaver Creek Road. Our primary goal was to rehabilitate the side hill on the trail-north end of Section 6. In addition, we hoped to clear several blow downs that had been reported on that stretch of trail. After a brief safety meeting in the chilly morning air, we selected our tools and started up the trail, eager for the short hike in that would warm us up. We had a good mix of six veteran BMTA workers and four first time attendees, one of whom was a guest. Sending two people up the trail with a chain saw to remove the blow downs, the remaining eight leap-frogged from one flagged work area to the next reshaping the tread way as we went.

The previous night had brought a light dusting of snow to the woods and we worked under cloud cover most of the day. Under these conditions no one was shedding many layers, despite the labor intensive work with pulaskis and fire rakes. By the time we took a lunch break near the top of Scroggin's Knob we had accomplished most of the planned work. With lunch temperatures only in the mid to upper 30's we did not relax long before getting back to business. As we finished the last of the side hill grooming shortly after lunch, we were joined by the sawyer crew on their way back down from the trail junction with the Stanley Gap Trail, A.K.A. Rich Mountain Trail. Due to a kinked chain on the saw, we left one log across the trail which does not impede foot travel.

Reminding us of the recent Christmas Holiday and providing a little levity was a white pine near a hairpin turn in the trail that some of us noticed on the hike out. It had been adorned by some unknown merry-makers with dull silver ornaments that were easy to miss on a gray winter's day, yet once spotted, provoked the imagination and prompted speculation as to the creators of the deep woods display.

Participating in the days work were members Tom Keene, Bob Ruby, Doug Kleiber, Mona Street, Steve Bayless and David Blount. Helping out for the first time were members Laura Bartlett, Walt George, Ken Cissna, and guest Mike Pilvinsky. Thanks to all that attended and to George Owen and Ralph Heller who scouted and flagged the section earlier in the week. Special thanks go to Bob Ruby for bringing his chainsaw and expertise with same. It was remarkable how well the first time attendees learned and applied our techniques for side hill work and the enthusiasm with which they did so. We hope to see them on another work trip soon.

Work hours for the day totaled 55 and travel hours totaled 25.5. All work took place in the Blue Ridge District of the Chatahoochee National Forest.

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip Report - January 22, 2011

by Richard Harris

Nine trail work volunteers converged to three areas of the Benton MacKaye Trail to work at low elevation on this beautiful crisp winter day. The original plans were to work on the trail in the Heart of Darkness and up near Waucheesi Bald, but they had to move to lower elevations and asphalt access due to closed forest service roads and too much snow and ice at high elevations.

Richard Sullivan, Tom Smith, David Blount, and a new volunteer Garry Day from down around Ocoee, TN, met

at the TN68 crossing of the BMT south of the village of Coker Creek and logged out 11 deadfalls on the trail from there to the BMT bridge over Coker Creek and also cleared brush away from the trail. Bill Hodge and Larry Dunn logged 5 trees off the trail from the Coker Creek Bridge going downstream along the Hiwassee River toward the Apalachia Powerhouse.

Rick Harris, Ken Jones and Bobby Mitchell met at the Towee Creek Access along the Hiwassee River along with Steve Biatowas (Ocoee/Hiwassee Ranger District Trails Tech). They first scoped out various possible bridge locations to get over Towee Creek. Plans are to possibly construct a new synthetic material bridge over the creek similar to the bridges used on the Cumberland Trail. Next step is to get the hydrologist in to look over the possible crossing sites. Once a site is chosen, then the BMTA can work with the national forest on getting the appropriate surveys done and find a funding source such as a TN Greenways & Trails RTP Grant and/or an American Hiking Society Grant.

After finishing with the bridge scoping, they then went east on the John Muir Trail Reroute Section and rebuilt a short section of trail around a large hole in the trail created when a large tree right on the edge of the trail fell and took the trail with it. They also hiked the rest of the reroute to the intersection with the old JMT, clearing two large logs off the trail and removing brush which was encroaching upon the trail. Unfortunately, they found another large hole in the trail near the east end of the reroute which is going to take a large crew and a whole day to fix. Since the hole is on a steep sideslope on a rock face, the hole will have to be filled with rocks to create a rock step staircase.

New Trail Signs in Tennessee by Richard Harris

As many of you know, new large metal highway signs have been placed where the BMT crosses US 64 in the Ocoee River Gorge and where the BMT crosses TN 68 just south of Coker Creek, TN. Through the efforts of George Owen with the BMTA and Doug Byerly with the Cherokee National Forest, permission and funding was obtained to also place new signs at several other road crossings. The signs have been manufactured and plans are being developed to place them at nearly every crossing of the BMT of any highway, secondary road and forest service road through the Tennessee corridor, including the Cherohala Skyway. Look to see these new signs on your rambles over this coming year.

Also, Richard Harris of the BMTA was appointed last year as a member of a committee relating to selecting projects within the Tellico Ranger District of the Cherokee National Forest to be funded by the Secure Rural Schools Act. This act provides funding to local communities in counties with large acreage of national forest land. These counties used to receive money from the CNF for the logging operations conducted within the county. This money was used primarily to fund local schools. Little logging occurs anymore in the national forest and the schools as a result were hurting for funds. The SRS Act provides spindown replacement funding for these school systems. Monroe County usually receives about \$400,000 each year. About 15% (\$60,000) is designated to go to projects within the national forest in Monroe County for the benefit of the citizens of Monroe County. Richard Harris worked with the Tellico Ranger District to select projects. Most of the money will be used to build new trail kiosks and to sign almost all trailheads and trail intersections with new HDPE plastic signs (outside wilderness) or routed wood signs (inside wilderness). About 100 signs will start appearing in the Tellico Ranger District over this next year. Many of these will be along the Benton MacKaye Trail. This project will help immensely in preventing hikers from losing their way and encouraging hikers to visit our trails.

Saturday, December 11, 2010: BMT Section 19c - Little T to Deals Gap -

Nine trail volunteers came out on this chilly cloudy day to log and brush out this section of the BMT that had been in part involved in a forest fire several months ago. One crew came in via the Alcoa Access Road from Deals Gap and the other crew came up from the Cheoah Dam on the Little Tennessee River. With chain saws and gas powered brush cutters, the work was accomplished quickly and the work was all done by 1PM. We thus ate lunch at the parking lot above the dam, then headed home. We also searched out a possible route to bypass the very steep section by the rock ledges and placed a few flags to potentially mark a new switchback route. Dick Evans will go back in the next few months and touch up the blazes. Volunteer hours are below:

Name	Travel Hours	Work Hours	Totals
Rick Harris	2.5	4	6.5
Ken Jones	3.5	4	7.5
Larry Dunn	3.5	4	7.5
Marty Dominy	5.0	3	8
Tom Smith	4.0	4	8
Dick Evans	2.0	4	6
Bill Lundin	4.5	4	8.5
Vic Frelund	3.0	4	7
Ernie Engman	2.0	4	6
TOTALS	30	35	65



"The Crew" - Cheoah Dam Parking Lot

Saturday, December 4, 2010: BMT Section 15c - Sandy Gap to Six Mile Gap - Four scouts and two adult leaders from Boy Scout Troop 797 in Atlanta joined two of our local maintainers to work on this section of the BMT as part of their requirements for the 50-Miler Award. The group went in from Sandy Gap on this chilly wet day and worked their way up toward Six Mile Gap with loppers, swing blades, and crosscut saws. Three trees were removed and lots of brush was cleared. They did not make it all the way to Sandy Gap before they ran out of time. The scouts then returned to the Smoky Mountain Christian Camp to spend the night Saturday night

before returning to Atlanta. Volunteer hours are below:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Travel Hours</i>	<i>Work Hours</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Bobby Mitchell	2	5.5	7.5
Tom Smith	1	5.5	6.5
2 Adults + 4 Scouts	0	5.5 x 6	32.5
Butch Horn	2	0	2
Totals	5	43	48.5

Saturday, December 4, 2010: Unicoi Turnpike Trail - Four scouts and one adult leader from Boy Scout Troop 797 in Atlanta joined four of our local maintainers to work on the Unicoi Turnpike Trail as part of their requirements for the 50-Miler Award. The group split up into two smaller groups, one went in from the top and one from the bottom. Five trees were removed and lots of brush was cleared. The two groups met at the old CCC camp, where Marc Bernatti filled them in on the local history of the trail. The scouts then returned to the Smoky Mountain Christian Camp to spend the night Saturday night before returning to Atlanta. Volunteer hours are below:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Travel Hours</i>	<i>Work Hours</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Marc Bernatti	1	2.5	3.5
Ken Dalton	1	2.5	3.5
Bill Geisler	1	2.5	3.5
Rick Pease	1	2.5	3.5
1 Adult + 4 Scouts	0	17.5	17.5
Totals	4	27.5	31.5

