



**Newsletter of the  
Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Inc.  
Post Office Box 6  
Cherry Log, GA 30522**

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**“Leaving a footpath for generations to follow.”**

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<i>NC Rep</i>	<i>Kim Hainge</i>
<i>Newsletter</i>	<i>Open</i>



### **Association News**

#### **Nominating Committee:**

President Dick Evans has appointed David Blount, Ralph Heller, Ken Jones and Vic Fredlund as the nominating Committee for the 2012 Election. They are to present a slate of nominees for the Members to vote upon at the upcoming Annual Meeting. If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, please let us know. You can email "President@BMTA.ORG" or use the "Contact Us" page on the Website. In particular, we are looking for a Newsletter Editor, with some knowledge of desktop publishing, and a Smokies Maintenance Director. In addition, although not a Board position, we are looking for someone with some bookkeeping or accounting background to assist the Treasurer.

#### **Annual Meeting:**

The 2011 Annual Meeting will take place the weekend of November 4, 5 & 6, 2011. This year, we are returning to Coker Creek Village. You will be able to make a reservation on the web, so watch the emails from the Association for those details, but schedule the date on your calendar now.

#### **New BMTA Headquarters Building in Blue Ridge, GA - by Marge Heller.**

On Saturday, June 25, Board Members of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association met with Joe Sisson, of Sisson Company, Mountain Log Home & Property Specialists, in Blue Ridge, to thank him for use of a cabin at his sales office. Mr. Sisson, a long-time supporter of the BMT, generously made the offer to the trail club so that members can spread the word on the trail. On occasional weekend days, members of the BMTA will sit on the front porch and provide information to anyone interested in



learning about the Benton MacKaye Trail. A section of the 288 mile BMT goes through Cherry Log Mountain Development, a Sisson property. Look for "trail info" signs on the highway and stop by. The Sisson Company is located at 344 Appalachian Hwy, Blue Ridge, GA.



**BMTA President Dick Evans thanking Joe Sisson, with Ralph Heller, Past President, Looking on.**

**PHOTOS by Marge Heller and Butch Horn**

### **Work Trip Reports**

**Sunday, May 29, 2011 - BMT Section 17c - Mud Gap to Whigg Meadow - Rick Harris went out alone to check out the condition of the trail from Mud Gap to Whigg Meadow. He found it in excellent shape. There were no downed trees and the vegetation was OK. He only used loppers to clear overhanging vegetation. Volunteer Hours : Rick Harris, 3 hours.**

**Monday, May 30, 2011 - Falls Branch Trail - Five hard workers including Pam and Kent Matthews who are responsible for this trail got out on this hot day to clear the Falls Branch Trail in preparation for the BMTA and Cherokee Hiking Club hikes for National Trails Day. We cleared about 6 trees from the trail and brushed out the trail, so now the trail is in pristine shape. While working, two groups of hikers came by. It is obvious this trail is getting quite a bit of use. One of the trees was a huge 24" or so buckeye which took Ken Jones and Rick Harris about 1 1/2 hours to cut out of the trail with a crosscut saw**

**Volunteer Hours:**

**Pam Matthews - 10.5 hours.**

**Kent Matthews - 10.5 hours.**

**Ken Jones - 8.5 hours**

**Rick Harris - 8.5 hours.**





**Monday, May 31, 2011 - BMT Section 12a-b - Ocoee to Kimsey Hwy - Margaret, Kim Hainge, and Dick Evans scouted the BMT from Deep Gap Trailhead on Kimsey Mountain Highway to Route 64 in Ocoee Gorge to prepare for the joint hike there on the 12th. It was not supposed to be a work trip, but it turned out that way. We found lots of blowdowns and brush obstructing the trail. We were able to clear or remove all but two major issues. About 3/8's of a mile from Deep Gap we found a big blowdown totally blocking the trail. We were able to clear enough for hikers to duck under the biggest logs, but my trail saw was not big enough for cutting the whole thing out. The trail is passable, but that will need a big saw, and it is in the Wilderness Study Area. About 1/4 mile from the other end, we came across a huge oak, pictured, blocking the trail. It is a definite blockage, and requires a big crawl over and was far too big for us to attempt. This is just past the power lines on the southern end, and definitely NOT in the wilderness. In addition, the trail under the power lines is badly overgrown and does need to be brush cut. We were able to clear the rest, but there were a lot of obstacles. The trail is passable now, but will need attention this summer.**



**Friday, June 3, 2011 - BMT TNINC Work Trip - BMT Section 16e - Sugar Mtn to Tellico River - Betty Petty, Ralph Van Pelt and Rick Harris logged and brushed out Betty and Ralph's section of the BMT on this quite warm but clear day. The flame azalea and mountain laurel were out in full bloom. This section of the mountain side is especially full of mountain laurel. We cleared two very large trees and several smaller trees off the trail corridor. This section is now in good shape.**

**Volunteer hours:**

**Betty Petty 11 hours**

**Ralph Van Pelt 1 hours**

**Rick Harris 7.5 hours**

**Monday, June 6, 2011 - BMT Section 11d - Big Frog Area - James Anderson (section maintainer) and Rick Harris logged out James' section with chain saw and crosscut saw on this 90+ degree day. We entered from FS 221 and went down the West Fork Trail, cutting out a few small trees, then along Rough Creek cutting out a couple large trees and few smaller trees. A third large tree was too big for our one man crosscut, so we trimmed it as best we could. It is very passable, but we will have to sometime finish the job. Once we crossed Rough Creek, there were a few extra small to moderate sized trees we cut out, reaching the intersection with the Fork Ridge Trail a little after 3 PM. We also threw off many branches and trimmed back some overhanging branches with loppers. We then hiked back to our 2nd car out the easy way along the Rough Creek Road FS 221G where it intersects FS 221. As we returned to Rough Creek coming down the steep hill, we heard a lot of loud tree branch-breaking by some creatures, possibly a couple of bear, though we never saw them and they never growled or made other**



noises to give their identity away. They ran up the opposite hill, we think. Except for the dead hemlock too big to cut with our one man crosscut, this section of trail is clear of blowdowns and generally in very good shape. James plans to go back in a few weeks and brush out the trail after the brush has had more time to grow.

**Volunteer Hours:**

\*James Anderson - 9 hours.

\*Rick Harris - 10 hours.

**Wednesday, June 8, 2011** - BMT Section 12a-b - Ocoee to Kimsey Hwy - Rick Harris, Ken Jones and Steve Biatowas worked on this section of the BMT today in very hot temperatures. First, we met at Deep Gap along Kimsey Hwy, then went south on the trail about a half mile to two big blowdowns involving multiple trees which were only about 100 feet from each other. It took us about an hour or more to clear these multiple trees with hand saws, axe, and crosscut saw. We then returned to Deep Gap, then brushed out the section under the powerlines in the open sun and into the woods a ways going both directions. We then returned again to Deep Gap and ate lunch. Then, Steve and Rick went down to Powerhouse #3 at the BMT crossing on US64 and brushed out the trail from the highway on up through the powerline crossing area. We then returned to the car and hopped into the air conditioning of our trucks. This section should now be in good shape all the way through, thanks for the work done by Dick & Margaret Evans and Kim Hainge a few days ago.

**Volunteer Hours:**

\*Rick Harris - 8 hours

\*Ken Jones - 5.5 Hours

\*Steve Biatowas (USFS) - 6 hours.

**Saturday, June 18, 2011** - BMT Section 17d - Mud Gap to Beech Gap - Rick Harris and Steve Cartwright (section maintainer) brushed out the sections of the trail which quickly become overgrown with weeds and briars, including the quarter of a mile to each side of North River Road, the section where the trail comes close to the skyway, and the section where the trail crosses the skyway. We quit when it started to rain and hail on us.

**Volunteer Hours:**

\*Steve Cartwright - 7 hours

\*Rick Harris - 5.5 hours

**Memorial Day Weekend - BMTA BOOTH AT ARTS IN THE PARK, BLUE RIDGE GA**

Memorial Day weekend saw the Benton MacKaye Trail promoted to attendees at Arts in the Park.

Lots of good, positive interest in the Trail resulted, and several new members joined the BMTA.

Manning the Booth were Board Members Ralph and Marge Heller, with help from Vic and Paula Fredlund, Shown in the photo are new members, Robert & Maggie Bickerstaff with Ralph Heller, Immediate Past President.



**Georgia Backroads Magazine features article by Walt Cook**

Pick up the Summer 2011 Issue of Georgia Backroads Magazine and enjoy reading an article on the BMT by member and volunteer Walt Cook. Retired from the University of Georgia School of Forest Resources, Walt lives in Athens, GA. The author acknowledges assistance in preparing this article provided by David Sherman, BMT Founder, and trail veterans George Owen and Chuck Logan.

**Georgia Maintenance Musings By Ralph Heller, Acting Maintenance Director - Georgia**

**We finally completed the walk-thru after all the bad spring storms. I cringed every time I heard a news report of storm damage and downed trees in the north Georgia area. The walk-thru furnished a snap shot of conditions on the BMT, and I was relieved to learn that we did not have a lot of downed trees on the trail. There was no heavy concentration of blow downs, just scattered fallen trees and only a few large ones. Many of the trees across the trail were the size that could be dispatched with a bow saw. We are still working on clearing the trail in some of the difficult to access areas, and the section maintainers are doing a good job of removing these smaller trees.**

**The possibility of having a large number of trees down is something I have been thinking about lately. Another storm like Hurricane Opal in 1995, which caused a tremendous amount of tree damage in the mountains, could be a major problem for the BMT. Over the years we have seen the number of qualified chain saw operators and cross cut certified people decrease to the point where we are in real need to get some more folks who can do this work. To do chainsaw work in the National Forest, a person must take a two-day certification course. In wilderness a chainsaw cannot be used. Instead, a cross cut saw is needed to cut downed trees. In addition the Sawyer must be certified in first aid and CPR. These courses are not offered that often, and sometimes they are offered on short notice. I have started a list of folks who would like to be certified. If we have enough persons, we could petition to have training for just our group. The courses have a limited enrollment and often fill up quickly. Everyone, who takes the course, learns a lot about sawing safety and techniques, even though they might have been sawing trees for many years without formal training. Besides, this is a great way to meet new folks and get to know some of our friends in the Forest Service. If you are interested, email me at [rshat@etcmail.com](mailto:rshat@etcmail.com) or call me at 706-636-3499.**

**Now is the time of year when the vegetation growth creates major problems. The trail corridor starts to narrow as trees and shrubs expand their dimensions. Briars grow up along the sides of the trail and then start to lean over the trail as gravity pulls on the long stalks reaching for the sun filtering through open canopy. This growth is especially a problem in areas where the canopy has been opened up as on old road beds, open fields and on ridge tops. It is a good idea to have a pair of hand-held trimmers ready to remove some unruly growth when hiking on the trail, even if you are not a section maintainer.**

**Remember! The primary focus of the BMTA is and should be keeping our trail in good condition for persons who hike the BMT.**

**Maintainers Needed By Ralph Heller, Acting Maintenance Director - Georgia**

**Our membership center of gravity has moved northward. In the early years a large majority of BMTA folks came from the Atlanta area. As the trail moved northward through Tennessee, we increased membership in that state. Recently, we have had more members from Gilmer, Fannin and surrounding areas join the BMTA. I just did a count of these members, and we have over 60 members permanently living near the trail, plus others nearby with weekend cabins. This is a very fortunate development. We now have plenty of folks nearby to the trail who can easily get to the BMT without having to travel a long distance for maintenance. We just need more of you to get active in maintenance activities.**

**We would like to see more of our members, local to the trail, participate in maintenance activities, such as the monthly Saturday work day, or becoming a section maintainer.**

**We have some sections which need maintainers. Some of these sections are recently open due to the previous maintainer having other new commitments. Open sections are as follows:**

**2c (Bryson Gap >> Toccoa River)**

**3c (Licklog-Rhodes Saddle >> Skeenah Gap)**

**5b (Ledford Gap >> Brawley Mountain)**

**7a (Weaver/Laurel Creek Road >> GA Hwy 515)**

**7d (Boardtown Road >> Bushy Head Gap). This is a road walk only needing blaze work.**

**8a (Bushy Head Gap >> Hudson Gap)**

**See the Benton MacKaye Trail Guide Georgia for a description of the sections and access points from trail heads. Sections 2c, 3c, 7a, 7d, and 8a have immediate trail head access which makes maintenance access easy. Anyone interested in becoming a maintainer for one or more of these sections, contact me at or phone me at 706-636-3499.**



***Some photos from the great National Trails Day Hikes. Many thanks to Pam Sullivan and Rick Harris for their efforts in setting up and leading this event.***



***The traditional Toast to Benton MacKaye on National Trails Day.***

