



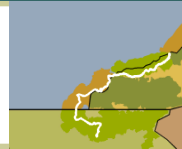
NEWSLETTER OF THE

BENTON MacKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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LEAVING A FOOTPATH FOR GENERATIONS TO FOLLOW



Tennessee/North Carolina Work Trip, March 5

Dick Evans

On a beautiful day in early March, five stalwart folks set out on a walk-through evaluation of the Tapoco Section of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT). The Tapoco Section, on the Tennessee/North Carolina line immediately west of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, is one of the most remote and least hiked sections of the Benton MacKaye Trail. The land is owned by Alcoa Power Generating Division of Alcoa Corporate, but they generously have given a right of way through their property. This allows the BMT to connect from Slickrock Creek in the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness, to the National Park section of the Trail.



Lunch along the trail. Photo by Dick Evans

The first three miles is on old gravel road. At one time, this was a toll road between Robbinsville, North Carolina, and Knoxville, Tennessee. The road was used by people bringing their produce and animals to the markets in Tennessee. Local folks tell stories of herding turkeys north through the woods to reach the buyers in the Big City. While we found (as expected) that the blazes were faded, this part of the Trail is impossible to lose, as the gravel road is unmistakable and a very pleasant walk. We thought we were too early for Spring wildflowers, but sharp-eyed Kim found the first Trillium of the season right by the Trail. Later in the Spring, the wildflower display is fantastic. One large log had fallen across the road, which was easily passed on foot, and will be removed later this season.

At a little less than three miles into the section, the Trail changes dramatically. It cuts up a slope, through a pine for-

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Tennessee/North Carolina Work Trip, March 5, continued

est devastated by the Pine Bark Beetle a few years ago, with lots of blowdowns and dead trees in the forest. The Trail was clear of blowdowns. At the ridge, the Trail rejoins part of the original Appalachian Trail, routed here until 1948, when it was relocated to cross over Fontana Dam. This part of the Trail is 1.7 miles in length, and we found it passable except in one location, scouted last year, which will need chainsaw work and tread work to restore it to full functionality. A wild fire went through this area last year, but yellow flags keep the hiker on course thru this area, and the forest is recovering nicely. In winter, there are nice views into the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness, and you can see Fodderstack Ridge where the BMT follows the edge of the Citico Creek Wilderness to the Cherochala Skyway. The Trail then passes under a power line and descends steeply to the Cheoah Dam.

Overall, there is only one area which needs work, but a warm Spring will bring out vines in profusion, so this section will need a good brush cutting once things green up. We will continue to use yellow flagging tape to indicate the Trail through the burn area until trees grow large enough for proper blazes. Signs are posted to that effect.

Travel Time -10 hours, Work Time -15 hours.

At one time, this [part of the BMT] ... was used by people bringing their produce and animals to the markets in Tennessee.

More Work Trips in Tennessee and North Carolina

Friday, March 4, 2011: BMT Section 18b - Fodderstack Trail -Yesterday while the rest of the crew re-flagged the proposed horse trails Roger Taylor and Bill Hodge logged out 4.5 miles of the Fodderstack/Benton MacKaye Trail. They worked from Farr Gap to the top of the Mill Branch Trail, and then hiked out the Mill Branch Trail. They cleared about 14 trees from the trail and a bunch of small stuff as well. The only down part of the day was discovering what is believed to be the largest tree in the Citico Creek Wilderness came down this winter. The Mill Branch Trail will need some attention. Hours:

Bill Hodge - 1 hour travel - 8.5 hours work - 9.5 hours total

Roger Taylor - 1 hour travel - 8.5 hours work - 9.5 hours total

March 16, 2011: BMT Section 19b - Slickrock Creek Area - Ernie Engman, section maintainer, went out on this beautiful spring day to work on his section. He cleared several blowdowns and brush and repainted several blazes. He left one very large hemlock outside of wilderness which will have to be cut out with chainsaw. Hours: travel time 2.5 hours, work time 6.5 hours, total 9 hours

Saturday, February 26, 2011: BMT Section 15c - Six Mile to Sandy Gap - This was the monthly TN/NC BMTA Work Trip. The day started out with temperatures right around freezing, but with abundant sunshine. By the time we reached Sandy Gap, the temperatures had warmed some, but most of us started the hike with jackets on. We all came out of the jackets after the first couple of uphill grades on the way to Sixmile Gap. On the hike in, we cleared one tree with the crosscut saw, limbed out another, and threw a couple of tops from the trail. At Sixmile Gap, we turned around and started brushing out the first 1/2 mile that is home to the Ash-leaved Bush-pea. This is a relatively rare plant, so the Mitigating Actions in the Environmental Assessment require that we brush this portion out only in winter. We worked hard in this portion and finished it before lunch time. After lunch we finished another 1/2 mile of brush out work to tie into a portion that was brushed out by a scout group last December. We finished this last mile back to Sandy Gap by improving on the work completed by the scouts. This entire section is now in good shape and returned to Forest Service Maintenance Standards. Here are the volunteer hours for this work trip:

Name	Travel Hours	Work Hours	Totals
Ken Jones	3.5	5	8.5
Richard Sullivan	3	5	8
Larry Dunn	3.5	5	8.5
Tom Smith	1	5	6
Totals	11	20	31

President's Column

My Side of the Campfire

Lots of things to comment on this month. In March, we had the annual Federal Land Managers' Meeting with our US Forest Service partners and all six Ranger Districts. Forest Supervisor's Office staff also attended. Unfortunately, the folks from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park were stopped by ice over Newfound Gap, but it was still a very good meeting. Many of you have noticed new Trailhead signs along the various roads where the BMT crosses, and these are a direct result of efforts by George Owen and our Forest Service friends, and we really appreciate them. By the end of the summer, we hope that all trail crossings will be signed by a standard sign to alert hikers and drivers.

Likewise, as a result of the meeting, we will be proceeding on the proposal for a bridge over Towee Creek in the Ocoee Ranger District. After the engineering is completed, the BMTA will have a fund raising effort to build this important addition to the trail. Also in Ocoee District, the Tennessee Department of Transportation Corridor K issue still looms over the Trail. The BMTA is a stakeholder in that process, and will be participating in public hearings late in March.



We continue to work on the wash-out at the bridge near Unicoi and Beech Gaps on the Cherohala Skyway. While important to us, this washout is just a part of a much larger drainage issue, and the Cheoah Ranger District is pushing for the North Carolina Department of Transportation to come up with a permanent solution. In the meantime, we still have signs diverting hikers around this erosion.

The Board of Directors decided at their meeting to let each Maintenance Director schedule their own Trail walk-through rather than trying to pick one date this year. Again, while we have a date, you can do the walk-through any time near that date if you prefer. The important thing is that we get good feedback on the condition of the trail. We will send an email about this.

We have some great recreational hikes planned for the next few weeks. Try to join us on one or more, and for the regularly scheduled work trips. We want to see you.

The Board of Directors finally held a meeting on March 11 at Ralph and Marge Heller's home in Cherry Log, Georgia. For a variety of reasons, mostly weather related, this was the first meeting since July of 2010, and the first since the Annual Meeting and Election in November, so a lot of issues were addressed. We discussed the Electronic Newsletter and how its implementation was proceeding. We also spent quite a bit of time on financial matters, reviewing the records of last year and approving a budget for 2011. We discussed which organizations should be belong to or support financially. After much discussion, the Board decided to maintain a continuing membership in the American Hiking Society, Appalachian Trail Conservancy and Save Georgia's Hemlocks. As a note, there are several other groups, like the Southeast Foot Trails Coalition, where there is not a financial obligation, and we did not discuss these, concentrating on those which affect the budget. In addition, as part of the Publicity costs, we are members of select Chambers of Commerce and related groups. We hope to develop a full list of all groups and organizations we are affiliated with and inform you. In other action, the President announced that an email address of "President@BMTA.org" has been established for official or long term communication with various agencies and groups, and a like address for the Treasurer to use when filing various required reports.

The Board usually meets on a quarterly basis, and we invite all members to attend those meetings. They are announced in the Newsletter and on the Activities Page on the Website.

Dick

Great New BMT Signs Fill Tennessee Road Crossings

By George Owen, BMTA Signs Coordinator

They catch the eye with huge, reflective white letters on brown background. These are the new road crossing Benton MacKaye Trail signs that now mark the trail road crossings throughout southeast Tennessee in the Cherokee National Forest.

From the first crossing on Forest Service Road 221 in Tennessee just north of the Georgia state line, to the scenic paved Cherohala Skyway near the North Carolina line south of the Smokies, these signs were placed across the southern half of the Cherokee National Forest over several days in March. Two signs are placed at each location, one facing each direction of the road just before the trail crossing. They inform travelers and mark trailheads for hikers.

We thank Doug Byerly and Nan Schlatterer of the Cherokee National Forest for their inspiration and hours of work to make this project happen. The effort really flew off the ground at the 2010 Benton MacKaye Trail Association and public land managers meeting at the Cherokee National Forest's Supervisor's Office in late winter 2010. Doug found the money to make this possible, and Nan did much of the design and follow-up work.

The larger paved road signs at such locations as U.S. 64, TN 68, and the Cherohala Skyway feature the following: main sign of "Benton MacKaye Trail," 36 by 30 inches; top hiker symbol sign, 24 by 24 inches; bottom sign with arrows, 21 by 15 inches. The slightly smaller signs on Forest Service gravel roads are designed for slower traffic: main BMT sign, 29 by 24 inches; top hiker logo, 18 by 18 inches; bottom arrows, 16 by 12 inches. The letters on the main middle sign on paved roads are five inches high. All signs are mounted on singular stout metal posts. The signs were made by the Utah Correctional Industries under contract with the U.S. Forest Service.



Most of our trail crossings even on Forest Service gravel roads in southeast Tennessee now have these prominent signs. Photo by George Owen

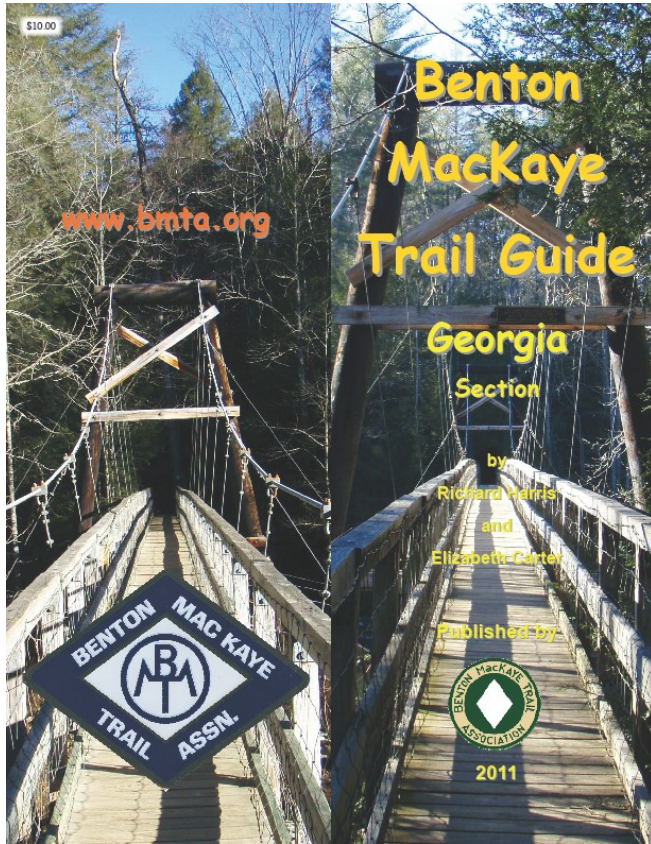


One of the new, large signs placed on paved roads at BMT crossings throughout the Cherokee National Forest, this one located on U.S. Hwy. 64. Bridge at Ocoee Power House #3 is in the background. Photo by George Owen

These signs are supplemented by trailhead signs placed in recent years throughout the Cherokee National Forest, including very large trailhead sets ordered and installed by Steve Biatowas in 2009 in the Ocoee District at U.S. 64 and TN 68 trailheads.

We express our utmost appreciation and great thanks to the folks of the Cherokee National Forest – Doug, Nan, Steve, and others – all whom made the BMT the best-signed trail on the southern Cherokee National Forest. If anyone can't find our trail there now, they have serious – very serious – problems!

Buy This Book!



Trail Guide to the BMTA in Georgia Just Released!

The Georgia Section of the Benton MacKaye Trail Guide Series has just been published. Second in the series by BMTA Members Richard Harris and Elizabeth Carter, this Guide covers each Trail section in Georgia, showing maps, profiles and informative photos and details of the area. The Guide includes driving directions to trailheads, trail descriptions, difficulty ratings and more. This is essential if you plan on hiking any of the Trail in Georgia.

For Members, we have a one-time, short-term offer - for orders placed thru the link below, and only for the month of April, you can get a copy of the Guide for only \$10, including shipping. North Carolina Members, Sales Tax will be added. Just click the link in the email that accompanied this newsletter, choose the quantity, and use your credit or debit card or PayPal account to pay for your very own copy of the Georgia Trail Guide.



Welcome New Members!

We hope to see you soon at a BMTA event!

Eric Winter Family, Marietta, GA

Jimmie Hoffman, Concord, NC



Trail User Input

By Ralph Heller

We received the following via email from the **Contact Us** page of our web site.

“Hi. My boyfriend and I just got back from a Spring Break backpacking trip along sections 9-10; Dyer Gap to Double Springs. It was a very nice hike, and we just wanted to thank you for keeping the trail so clear! It was very enjoyable and we are planning on maybe hiking the whole trail section(s) at a time. Thanks for such a great trail! We really appreciated it and enjoyed ourselves very much. Keep up the great work!”

These sections are maintained by Bill Hamrick, Mona Street, Delmar Yoder, Larry Rice, Mike Christison, and Jim Holland. Comments like this point out what a good job our trail maintenance workers are doing in keeping the BMT in good condition and providing a great hiking experience for folks who use our trail. Great work, maintainers! Also, thanks to all who participate in the monthly Saturday work trips.

BMTA Is Well-Represented at Local Events

By Marge Heller

BMTA Presents at Appalachian Trail Backpacking Clinic

On Saturday, March 5, Immediate Past President Ralph Heller told the BMT story through a power point presentation to 68 attendees at the Amicalola Falls AT Backpacking Clinic. Included in the presentation was the announcement of the new Georgia Trail Guide for the BMT. This is the third year that the Benton MacKaye Trail Association participated in this event. Ralph, with help from members Tom Mitchell and Jode Hanson, shared information afterwards at the BMTA display.

Dahlonega Celebrates Designation as Appalachian Trail Community

A celebration was held March 18-20 to celebrate the naming of Dahlonega, GA as an Appalachian Trail Community. The BMTA was invited to present and, on Saturday, March 19, Board Member Bob Ruby spoke to a group of attendees about the Benton MacKaye Trail during his power point presentation. Other members attending the event to help get the word out on the BMT were Immediate Past President Ralph Heller, Publicity Director Marge Heller and founding member, George Owen.

Georgia Worktrip March 12 a Great Success

Darcy Douglas

Thanks to all who participated in this very productive, though creative, work trip on my section of trail. We did some general clearing and cleaning, dug out waterbars and created new ones, but we also did something new and interesting. We put "dam-lets" on the trail itself! Attempts in past years at creating waterbars in this very gullied area had resulted in newly created soil raised above the previous level of the gully basin. After noticing that improvement from work completed long ago, we decided to do it purposefully. Everyone played a part in creating the little dams, fairly close to one another. Now, I just have to stay alive long enough to see the rewards of this work!! It won't happen overnight! Since re-routing that portion of trail is not an easy option, building up the soil should help prevent erosion and create a positive walking surface.

A real plus was the weather, contributing to the many hikers and backpackers who gladly took our easily carried business cards and offered to come work with us in the future.

(Oh, after a good day's work, we hiked up to Springer Mtn. so our foreign guests could experience that summit, meet some AT thru hikers, and see our plaque in honor of Benton MacKaye. A good time was had by all, and several took pictures.)

Long term and experienced members Claire Broadwell, Wes Clonts, Tom Keene, and Doug Kleiber were joined by fairly new member Garry Day as well as guests Mary and Roger Mannell (from Canada) and Mike Pilvinsky (who could have walked to the work site from his home).

Again, thank you so much for your efforts! They are much appreciated!

Travel Hours: 35 Work Hours: 40.5 Total Volunteer Hours: 75.5

We Need Your Ideas!

Please click on the survey link in the email that accompanied this newsletter. We are earnestly seeking your opinions about a few issues. The survey does not require you to disclose any personal information or log in to any sort of account or web page. It is very short but we promise we will carry your Pulaski for you on the next work trip if you complete the survey! Please! We're begging!



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