



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.”

Mud Gap Trailhead Parking Lot on the Cherohala Skyway.



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<i>President</i>	<i>Dick Evans</i>
<i>Vice President</i>	<i>David Blount</i>
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<i>TN/NC Maint</i>	<i>Rick Harris</i>
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<i>Newsletter</i>	<i>Open</i>

BMTA RECEIVES TOOL DONATION

Submitted by David Blount

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association received a generous donation in April from life member Russ Scribner. Russ served as Maintenance Director in the mid-nineties and maintained a Georgia section of the trail near Watson Gap for a number of years. Like many section maintainers who prefer to use their own tools, Russ amassed quite a collection over the years. Upon his recent decision to move back to his native Maine, Russ contacted the BMTA and offered to donate his personal trail tools. The collection includes a couple of pulaskis, a fire rake, a chain saw, and 2 crosscut saws! This donation will allow funds that might have been spent to replenish tool supplies to be redirected to other expenses of our organization. The board extends our thanks to Russ for his past service and for the donated tools. Our loss is Maine's gain and we wish Russ well in his move north!



TRAVEL WRITERS VISIT TO NORTH GEORGIA



The BMTA was asked to participate in a special luncheon for 26 Travel Writers and 10 State of Georgia Tourism Officials on Friday, May 13, at Amicalola Falls. Co-Hosted by Gilmer and Fannin County Chambers of Commerce, the two day event gave the visitors an opportunity to see and learn about all that North Georgia has to offer. Representing the BMTA were President Dick Evans, Interim Maintenance Director Ralph Heller and Marge Heller, Publicity. This is the new Display created by Marge Heller. It looked great! Many thanks to her.

Bridge Replacements on Section 7b

By Ralph Heller, Acting Georgia Maintenance Director

We have three bridges that need replacing on Section 7b in the Sisson Cherrylog Mountain Development. Joe Sisson will be donating much of the material need to replace the bridges. We will try to get a lot of the work done on the Georgia Saturday work trip on July 9. . We will meet at 8:30 at the pavilion in the Sisson Development where our tool shed is located. I will need commitments from at least 8 folks for work on the bridges. There is other work to be done on this section which we can also do depending on how many folks will be available on that date. Marty Dominy has agreed to head up this project, so we will definitely have a first class installation when it is finished. According to Marty, we should be able to complete the two smaller bridges and install the foundation for the larger bridge on that day. Let's have a good turnout for this important project.

Please let me know if you plan to help, as we need a count of folks who will be available for this project. I can be reached at Ph: 770-235-9760 or email:rshastl@etcmail.com.

Georgia Work Trip April 9

Acting Georgia Maintenance Director – Ralph Heller

We had a small, but hard working crew for the Georgia work trip on Saturday April 9. The day was beautiful and in the 80's for work along Section 7a, an old road bed extension west from Weaver Creek Road beyond where the pavement ends and goes through National Forest property. This section of trail, accessible by vehicle, was littered with trash. In addition to cans and bottles strewn all along this section, there were several dump sites for construction debris and household trash, including old tires, rugs, appliances and furniture. The trash was picked up and consolidated to two locations to be picked up by a dump truck from the Forest Service of Blue Ridge District. Unfortunately the truck was in for repair, so the pickup will be scheduled when the truck is available. About a dozen large trash bags, filled



with cans, bottles and small trash items were placed at the consolidated sites. Even though this trip did not include the normal work requirements of trail maintenance, everyone expressed feelings of accomplishment, having made a tremendous improvement in the appearance of this section of trail. Attending the work trip were members Doug Kleiber, Ken Cissna, Laura Bartlett, and Ralph Heller. We had two guests, Oscar Ramer and Margaret Cohn. Total travel time was 14.5 hours and work time 21 hours.

While working, we discovered a large bear which had died near the trail. The Forest Service was notified.

The Forest Service removed the trash piles on the week of April 18. This section is now looking good.

Tennessee & North Carolina Work Trips – by Rick Harris, TN/NC Maint Director

April 18, 2011 BMT Sections 16c-d. Sledrunner Gap to Sugar Mtn - Arlin Phillips and a friend Jeff Pike on horse logged out the BMT from Sugar Mtn down the Upper Bald River drainage to the Brookshire Creek Crossing and on up the Brookshire Creek Trail to the Beaverdam Bald Road, then over to the horse trail connecting to the Sugar Mtn Road. Also they logged out the Brookshire Creek Trail on down to the Bald River Road. Arlin and Jeff are SABCH members (Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen). Thanks, guys, for you hard work which benefits the horsemen and the hikers and backpackers. Both men logged 2 travel hours and 6 work hours.

May 6, 2011 BMT Section 13e. Coker Creek to Wildcat Creek - We cleared about 20 trees off this section of the BMT which we had heard was really bad per reports from backpackers. Some of the trees were big with multiple branches over the trail, blocking the trail forcing hikers to crawl through or go around the ends of the trees. We were quite surprised how bad this section of the trail was, considering it was clear of trees as recently as about 6 weeks ago per the section maintainers Tom Smith and Larry Dunn. We presume the trees came down during the recent violent storms which hit east Tennessee. Several were still green with new leaves. We also cleared a few trees from the old JMT route between the end of the reroute and the powerhouse, but there are several trees still needing work, including one huge 30 inch or so tree completely blocking the trail with a long walk-around. Rick Harris and Larry Dunn logged 8 hours each, and Tom Smith, 7.5.

Thru-Hiker Story (somewhat edited-Dick) by “Buttons”.



I just thought that i would share my experience of the Benton MacKaye Trail with you. first of all, i really enjoyed it. i would, and already have recommended it to other hikers. i did a northbound thru-hike of the BMT, starting at the approach trail at Amicalola Falls and ending at Standing Bear Farm. this was my second time hiking the approach trail and staying at Standing Bear Farm because of my thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail last year, 2010. I started out on the 27th of March which i think was a good time to start. I completed my hike of the BMT on the 26th of April. It was nice getting to meet the A.T. hikers at Springer Mountain shelter. after that, there were almost no other hikers. so, I'm glad that I decided to go with a partner, someone who I met last year on the A.T. it was a surprise and a disappointment that Martin's Dixie Store was closed. but, it all worked

out. we ended up hitching into Blairsville. Then, another disappointment at Aska road. the Toccoa Wilderness Outpost was closed because of change of ownership. but, we had a nice meal at the Toccoa Riverside Restaurant. it was a great stop with excellent service.

Cherry Log was a good stop at the Chevron. it was convenient, (get it?). a nice guy gave us a ride back to the trail. we stayed at the Indian Rock Shelter, where we got two surprises. one, we were surprised at how nice the shelter was. and again, when two section hikers showed up. before Ducktown, we meet a southbound solo woman BMT thru-hiker. she was happy because we gave her the map that she was missing. and we exchanged ideas of trail conditions. that's a great thing about meeting other hikers. we can help each other.

Big Frog was a little confusing because of the lack of blazes and signs. then, there was Ducktown. we didn't have luck hitching. so, we called the Ducktown Copper Inn. the owner, Gilligin, came to pick us up. he was very nice. he even took us back to the trail in the morning. Ducktown was a great stop, even though there wasn't a laundry. at least we found Heet at the Family Dollar, which we used for cooking.

when we reached Reliance, surprise, the Hiwassee Scenic River Outfitters was closed. but, we stopped at Webb Brothers Store. there was a nice older lady running the place. even though some of the items were outdated, the company and coffee was good. she made a whole pot just for us.

our next stop was Green Cove Motel. it's nothing fancy, and again, no laundry. but, a nice older couple run the place. they also gave us a ride back to the trail. it was a really nice easy hike out of Tellico River, for going up to 5000 ft. the old rock quarry was a great campsite.

going into Fontana wasn't easy, long road walking to the Twenty Mile Ranger Station. there were many motorcycles and sports cars, not easy to hitch a ride with them. a guy with a golf cart stopped at Deals Gap,

but it was to far to go for him, so he gave us some food instead.ce we ended up getting a ride from a nice family who had finished fishing near the Ranger Station. they probably felt so bad because they saw that we were waiting at the road so long. later on we heard that the BMT will be rerouted on the old A.T. that will go right into Fontana. is this true? (Note from Dick-more on this trail routing issue later this summer) it was nice to go into Fontana Village again. i was also there last year. it is a beautiful lake. it was nice to meet more A.T. hikers there. the General Store and Fontana Hilton are nice. the only thing is that the shuttle wouldn't take up back to the Ranger Station. we had to pay \$50 for a different shuttle out of town. of course, we could have just hiked the A.T. back to the BMT, but we would have skipped part of the trail.

then there was the Great Smoky Mountains. again, my second time in the Smokies. but, i got to go into Gatlinburg for the first time. and considering how far it is from the BMT, it was pretty easy hitching, both in and out of town. the Grand Prix was nice, they're real hiker friendly. and it was inexpensive. it was nice meeting two other northbound BMT thru-hikers who catch up to us in the Smokies. they knew who we were because of our register entry at the Indian Rock Shelter. my suggestion would be to have more registers on BMT. it is important communication between hikers. even though the lack of shelters, these registers can be placed at trees or on post. it was nice sharing campsites with the other BMT nobos.

and a nice ending at Standing Bear Farm, my favorite hostel on the A.T. i love that place. the owner Curtis is very nice. overall, the BMT was great. we did get lost a couple of times, both where we ended up doing big loops. but both times we realized where we went wrong and easily got back on track. a special thanks to SGT Rock and his thru-hiker's guide to the Benton MacKaye Trail. you can check out photos on my facebook page, Christine Buttons Herpfer. My trail name is Buttons. My hopes are to someday do some trail work...

Saturday, April 2, 2011 - BMT Section 17d - Mud Gap to Beech Gap -

On this beautiful spring day, three of us logged out this section of the BMT as part of our spring Saw-A-Thon. The trail was actually in very good shape. We threw a lot of branches and small trees off the trail and used our saw on 6 or 7 trees, two of which were quite sizable on each side of the North River Road crossing. The trail is wide open for the spring hikers. We met a scout troop from down in Georgia at Beech Gap when we were finishing up. They were heading out north with plans to camp at Cherry Log Gap tonight, then work their way down to Slickrock Creek, then up to Naked Ground then back to Beech Gap, coming back out on Tuesday. This was one of their shakedown backpacks in preparation of their trip to Philmont in New Mexico this coming summer. Volunteer hours



Steve Cartwright – 6.5 hours

Rick Harris – 5.5 hours

Dick Evans – 5.5 hours

Saturday, April 2, 2011 - BMT Section 12a - Dry Pond Lead Trail -

We had a really nice day to work on logging out the trail today. We started in from US 64 with the crosscut saw and axe, and found the portion to the Rock Creek Trail intersect had only one 6" tree to clear. We especially want to thank you and Gary Smith for clearing several time consuming blow downs. We continued about another mile beyond the Rock Creek Trail intersection and cleared another 3 trees. The last tree was causing hikers to go off trail to get around it. We got the saw stuck about 2/3 of the way down in a 14" oak tree. We spent some time chopping the saw out of this tree, but finally got it cleared. Here are the volunteer hours for this trip:

Ken Jones – 6.5 hours

Tom Smith – 6 hours

Saturday, April 23, 2011 - BMT Sections 12b,c,d & 13b,c,d - Spring Saw-A-Thon -

A total of 10 workers showed up on this beautiful warm Saturday before Easter to saw logs off the BMT. Six worked on Section 12 from Kimsey Highway to the Hiwassee River, two in each saw crew going to all three sections. Kimsey Highway to McFarland Road was Rick Harris and Bill Lundin, McFarland Road to Lost Creek Campground was Ken Jones and Jim DeBernardi, and the Lost Creek Section was Bobby & Joanne Mitchell. North of the Hiwassee on the John Muir Trail were Darcy Douglas and Marty Dominy from Towee Creek to the Childers Creek Trailhead, and Bill Hodge and Larry Dunn from Towee Creek to end of the reroute and back via

the old JMT along the river. Darcy and Marty also repainted blazes on Section 12c. Thus the trail is clear of blowdowns from Kimsey Highway to Wildcat Creek, a distance of 18.4 miles. Volunteer hours are below:

Rick Harris – 8 hours

Bill Lundin – 9 hours

Ken Jones – 8.5 hours

Jim DeBernardi – 8 hours

Bobby Mitchell – 6 hours

Joanne Mitchell – 6 hours

Marty Domini – 11.5 hours

Darcy Douglas – 11.5 hours

Bill Hodge – 7 hours

Larry Dunn – 7.5 hours

(Folks, that's 57 hours of work, and 26 of travel – fantastic!)



May 20-21, 2011 - BMT Section 19b - Slickrock Creek Area -



Ernie Engman and his sons (Matthew and William) worked on logging out their section over two days and did not get the job completed. They worked about 6.5 hours on May 20 and another 2.5 hours on May 22. There are some nasty blow downs and some erosion issues. With all that work they only made it in 1.5 miles on their section and they still need to go back at a later date and finish some of what they started. The hemlock noted of a previous trip had 5 new trees on top of it right on the trail. They cleared out 4 of them and limbed out the 5th so a chainsaw can get to it. They almost finished clearing another one that also took a bunch of trail with it. They were able to fill back in the hole for the trail, but after getting that one half cut out (4 hours of the total work were on this one blow down) it is passable but needs a chainsaw to finish it. Ernie has the

contact information for Jeremy and Scott with the USFS for when he can go back in with them and finish out those two. The link is for the video of the hemlock involved blow down after they cleared it out some.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5rJJTARoGQ>

Ernie, Matthew and William logged 12.5 hours each!

Fun Trip - The BMTA hiked and camped at Appletree Campground located on the Upper Nantahala River in NC in early May. This was a joint venture with GATC, MHH and the BMTA and was organized by Bob Ruby. We did hikes on the London Bald Trail, the Bartram Trail and the AT to Wesser Bald.

We saw wildflowers galore on our hikes: jack-in-the-pulpits, flame azaleas, wild geraniums, umbrella plants, clintonia, daisy fleabane and lady slippers. This event is on you

tube:<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3IKefPhJIA>



Trail Maintenance – by Dick Evans

At our core, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association is a trail building and maintaining organization. The dedicated section maintainers, together with the Maintenance Directors and other folks who join in on the twice-monthly work trips contribute to creating a fantastic wilderness hiking opportunity. This did not happen by accident-it took lots of hours, by our members, other groups and our Forest Service Professionals as partners. In this regard, the Forest Service has posted a tremendous resource for the public on the web, and we have linked to it on our “Section Maintainers Guidelines”page. <http://www.bmta.org/SectionMaintainerGuidelines.htm>

This site gives a comprehensive outline of the design criteria for various types of trails, so let me expound on that for a few lines. The first criteria is the type of trail, or “Designed Use”. Although they have many listed, the most usual for the BMT are : “Hiker/Pedestrian” and “Pack and Saddle”. Each “Design Use” then has a range of Trail Classes, one through five, giving design and maintenance standards. Below is the chart for the “Hiker/Pedestrian” Design Use.

Designed Use HIKER/PEDESTRIAN		Trail Class 1	Trail Class 2	Trail Class 3 ²	Trail Class 4 ²	Trail Class 5 ²
Design Tread Width	Wilderness (Single Lane)	0” – 12”	6” – 18”	12” – 24” Exception: may be 36” – 48” at steep side slopes	18” – 24” Exception: may be 36” – 48” at steep side slopes	Not applicable
	Non-Wilderness (Single Lane)	0” – 12”	6” – 18”	18” – 36”	24” – 60”	36” – 72”
	Non-Wilderness (Double Lane)	36”	36”	36” – 60”	48” – 72”	72” – 120”
	Structures (Minimum Width)	18”	18”	18”	36”	36”
Design Surface ³	Type	Native, ungraded May be continuously rough	Native, limited grading May be continuously rough	Native with some onsite borrow or imported material where needed for stabilization, occasional grading Intermittently rough	Native with improved sections of borrow or imported material, routine grading Minor roughness	Likely imported material, routine grading Uniform, firm, and stable
	Protrusions	≤ 24” Likely common and continuous	≤ 6” May be common and continuous	≤ 3” May be common, not continuous	≤ 3” Uncommon, not continuous	No protrusions
	Obstacles (Maximum Height)	24”	14”	10”	8”	No obstacles
Design Grade ³	Target Grade	5% – 25%	5% – 18%	3% – 12%	2% – 10%	2% – 5%
	Short Pitch Maximum	40%	35%	25%	15%	5% FSTAG: 5% – 12% ²
	Maximum Pitch Density	20% – 40% of trail	20% – 30% of trail	10% – 20% of trail	5% – 20% of trail	0% – 5% of trail

Designed Use HIKER/PEDESTRIAN		Trail Class 1	Trail Class 2	Trail Class 3 ²	Trail Class 4 ²	Trail Class 5 ²
Design Cross Slope	Target Cross Slope	Natural side slope	5% – 20%	5% – 10%	3% – 7%	2% – 3% (or crowned)
	Maximum Cross Slope	Natural side slope	25%	15%	10%	3%
Design Clearing	Height	6'	6' – 7'	7' – 8'	8' – 10'	8' – 10'
	Width	≥ 24" Some vegetation may encroach into clearing area	24" – 48" Some light vegetation may encroach into clearing area	36" – 60"	48" – 72"	60" – 72"
	Shoulder Clearance	3" – 6"	6" – 12"	12" – 18"	12" – 18"	12" – 24"
Design Turn	Radius	No minimum	2' – 3'	3' – 6'	4' – 8'	6' – 8'

As you can see from this, if a Maintainer knows the “Design Use” and the “Trail Class” of a particular section of trail, then it is easy to determine the width, grade, clearance, etc, and maintain the trail to those parameters. The BMT, like many trails, has sections where the “Design Use” may be two or more users, such as Hiker and Horse, etc, and obviously, trail maintenance on such “joint” sections should be to the design for both users. As you can tell from the chart, the BMT is normally a Class 2 or 3 type, but this can vary, so we intend to coordinate with our National Forest partners to produce a comprehensive listing of each section of the trail, with the “Design Use” and “Trail Class” for each, and then disseminate this to the Maintainers. This will be a departure from the old standards of “5 feet wide x 8 feet tall”, so some of us will have to re-adjust our thinking to these parameters.

The Forest Service link page provides a great deal of information on the entire range of trail building and maintaining issues, and I really recommend that everyone take some time and explore this resource. As we go through the year, we are going to try to incorporate this information in further newsletters for maintainers. By knowing and following these standards, we will have a better and more consistent trail for our users to enjoy.

With that, let me wish everyone a great summer of hiking, and I hope that I will

“See you on the Trail.”

Dick

Last Minute Additions!

Reporting Locations Of Problems On The Trail – Ralph Heller

Larry Dumas, one of our very active members, just sent me his report on his walk-through section. He had a novel way of reporting the location of blow downs on the trail. He used his camera. As he came across each location he took a picture with his digital camera. Since his camera, and most digital cameras, have timeldate stamp capability for each picture, he was able to give me a chronological accounting of the downed tree locations. By giving the starting time of the walk-thru it was easy to calculate the times to each tree across the trail. Using the ending time and the length of the walk-thru, one can estimate the approximate walking speed of the individual doing the inspection, except for rest stops. Also, it was easy to assess how much work would be required to remove, each tree based on what was seen in the picture.

Even a cheap digital camera will work for this method. It is great to use a GPS, if everyone had GPS capability and the GPS worked reliably under leaf canopy. But most of us do not have a GPS. Estimating mileage does not work accurately for many of us, and not everyone will accurately pinpoint a gap or other map location as a reference for a problem location. Using a digital camera appears to me to be a great tool for reporting problem locations.

May 27, 2011 - BMT Section 19b - Slickrock Creek to Little T - Ernie Engman (section maintainer) got Rick Harris and Dick Evans out to help him cut some big logs off his section with chainsaw. We accomplished the job, but Rick had to let his chainsaw cool down a couple of times. After cutting some trees off a huge hemlock, we then cut the hemlock itself, (see picture).

Rick Harris – 8 hours

Ernie Engman – 7.5 hours

Dick Evans – 5 hours.



Saturday, May 28, 2011 - BMTA TN/NC Work Trip - BMT Section 16b - Sledrunner Gap to Round Top - While everyone else was grilling hot dogs and hamburgers in the 90 degree heat, 4 maintainers got out on this beautiful day keeping cool in the 4000'+ elevations of Beaverdam Bald and Rocky Top. We brushed out about a mile of trail and cleared a few downfalls. This section was in good shape, much better than in past years. It is obvious it is getting quite a bit of hiker traffic, probably as a result of our TN/NC BMT Guide. On this trip were two new maintainers, "Freckles" and "Sprite", both of whom thru-hiked the AT in 2008. They have done maintenance trips on the AT, but this was their first on the BMT. They plan to come out more often, since the BMT is in their backyard. They live just down the mountain side from this section on the NC side. Kendall Hobson, section maintainer, brought them along. Volunteer hours are as follows:

Kendall Hobson – 7.5 hours

Greta Farmer – 7.5 hours

Shirley Adams – 7.5 hours

Rick Harris – 6.5 hours