



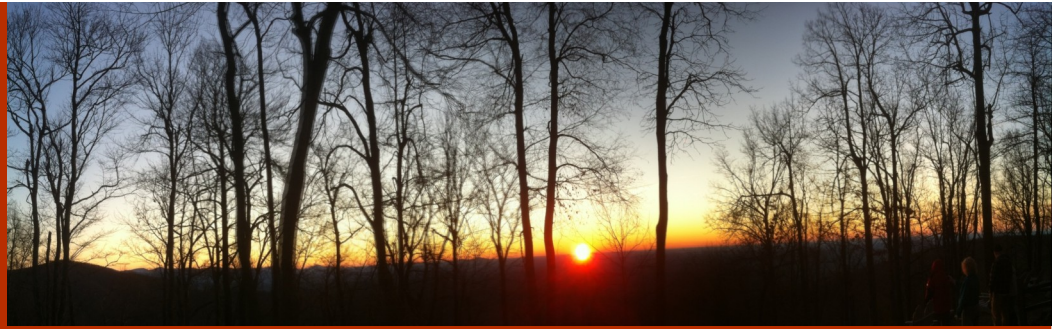
Points of Interest

Go directly to the page by clicking on the title.

- [Former Leader Remembered](#)
- [General Announcements](#)
- [Training for Maintaining](#)
- [President's Column](#)
- [Collaborative Trail Project](#)
- [Meet Your Board Members](#)
- [TN/NC Work Trip Jan 29th](#)
- [GA Work Trip Feb 11th](#)
- [Becks Eagle Service Project](#)

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Sunrise Photo at the Hike Inn by: Ralph Heller



VOLUME 29, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 29, 2012

BMTA Former Leader Is Remembered

By George Owen

Long-time BMTA member and our former vice president William F. (Bill) Ross III died January 27 after an enduring battle with cancer. He was 47. Bill was also a lifetime member of the Appalachian Trail Conference and Trout Unlimited. A graveside service was held at Madison (GA) City Cemetery on February 1, conducted by Fr. Dan Brown of the Madison Episcopal Church of the Advent.



Bill left an especially enduring mark on our association until this day with the outstanding long-range planning meeting he planned and over which he presided several years ago. From this event came our two main goals that have led us ever since: 1) acquiring better protected routes off roads for our 5% of 288 miles that is not on federally protected lands, and 2) growing our membership into a more viable organization. In this day-long planning meeting at Cherry Log's Sisson Pavilion, Bill did a marvelous job of providing a medium for us to see and continue to push forward these and other goals. (NOTE: This writer, who in his career has gone through long-range planning meetings with several significant organizations, told Bill afterwards that this was by far the best-led one that I had ever experienced.)

Graduating from Middle Tennessee State University with a *cum laude* B.S. in political science in 1998, Bill went on to receive his Master's Degree in city planning from Georgia Institute of Technology in 2000. Since then he has worked as a planner for his father's business, Ross & Associates. Bill has since been involved in planning studies for over 35 cities and counties in Georgia. He also has been a member of several honor societies.

Among his other many interests, Bill was a member of Delta Tau Delta Fraternity, Zeta Kappa, was a musician and film-maker, and an avid Red Sox fan. The last time some of us saw Bill was a few months ago when he was still able to come out for a couple of BMTA Saturday work trips.

Bill is survived by his parents, William Ross II and Sharon Ross and several aunts.

We will definitely miss Bill and his humorous comments and good company along our trail. However, we are thankful that some things he helped us set in motion some years ago endure, including our very important committee now chaired by Butch Horn to secure our entire trail route. Through these, Bill Ross lives on in the BMTA.

Notice to Hikers: Campsite 93

The bear cable food storage system at Campsite 93 on the BMT in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has broken and is not usable. Due to high bear activity in that area, we recommend that hikers avoid that site until repairs are completed.

2012 Appalachian Trail Celebration & Backpacking Clinic, March 2 - 4

By Marge Heller

Amicalola Falls State Park is once again hosting the annual Appalachian Trail Celebration & Backpacking Clinic, Friday - Sunday, March 2- 4, 2012. There will be lots of speakers...vendors...authors...and booths. Come out to see BMTA Board Member, Bob Ruby, who will be giving a power point presentation on the Benton MacKaye Trail, Sunday, March 4th, 11am. Also, BMTA Member Travis Crouch of North Georgia Mountain Outfitters of Ellijay, GA will be speaking on

Saturday, March 3, at 2pm on how to fit a backpack and on Sunday, the 4th at 3pm, Travis will present rules of the trail with Leave No Trace. NGMO will also have Benton MacKaye Trail Guides for sale plus a selection of hiking and camping gear.

BMT Hikers Lose Toccoa Riverside Restaurant

One of the only businesses actually on the trail has been lost to fire. The Toccoa Riverside Restaurant was a popular eating establishment located on Aska Road. It had been in business since 1991. The restaurant was located on Section 6.

Bear Canisters Now Required From Jarrard to Neels Gap

Posted on February 9, 2012 by Lisa Schnellinger

Beginning March 1, anyone camping overnight along the five miles of Appalachian Trail from Jarrard Gap to Neels Gap on the Chattahoochee National Forests must bring a solid, non-pliable bear-resistant canister to contain personal garbage, toiletries and foods. The new regulation was issued by the USDA Forest Service in response to public safety concerns and repeated bear-human conflicts in the region.

More details on the Forest Service website: [Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest – News & Events](#).



Training For Maintaining Still Has Openings

We know a lot of you folks have been considering attending the Training For Maintaining session on March 10th but just have not gotten around to making the decision to participate and letting us know of your intent. We would especially like to see more of our section maintainers. This will not only be a learning opportunity, as we will be giving out information which will help standardize trail maintenance criteria, but it will also be a chance to get together and meet other members whom you would not ordinarily see, except possibly at the Annual Meeting. The event, starting at 9am on Saturday at the Ocoee Whitewater Center in Tennessee, will include lunch.

There are still four openings for the CPR/First Aid certification course. Anyone considering getting chainsaw certification or who needs CPR/First Aid recertification to maintain chainsaw certification should consider getting this course out of the way. The BMTA is paying for the training. Also, folks who plan to be hike or work trip leaders are strongly advised to have first aid training.

The day's schedule is as follows:

- 9:00 AM Welcome and introductions – BMTA President
- 9:15 – 9:45 USFS Trail Design Standards/Trail Parameters/Usage
Classifications – by Jeremy Waite, Cheoah Ranger District, USFS
- 9:45 - 10:15 Personal Protective Equipment and Tailgate Safety briefings,
by Dick Evans and Ken Jones
- 10:15 – 10:30 Break
- 10:30 – 11:00 Job Hazards and Mitigation/Job Hazard Analysis(JHA's) - by Steve
Biatowas, Ocoee Ranger District, USFS
- 11:00-11:45 Annual Walk-Thru/Trail Conditions and Hours Worked Reporting,
Monthly Work Trip Info, and Tools Briefing- by Tom Keene and Rick
Harris
- 11:45-12:00 Injury Reporting Procedures and Workers Comp -by Dick Evans
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch provided by BMTA
- 1:00 – 5:00 First Aid Track. Basic First Aid and CPR Certification
Taught by Jim Holland
or
Trails Skills Track for those not taking CPR/ First Aid
(Includes information on water mitigation and switchbacks and will
involve hands on participation - weather permitting}
Please bring work gloves, safety goggles and clothes suitable for trail
work. Taught by Walter Cook

Those planning to attend the Training for Maintaining event should let us know by sending an email to president@bmta.org. Also, let us know if you want to take the CPR/ First Aid Certification course. We only have four more openings.

If we have already contacted us, you are registered.
See you on the 10th!



If any of you readers have trail stories, gear advice, funny stories, or just a memorable trip you would like to see published in the Newsletter, please email them to

Editor@bmta.org

President's Column... Dick Evans

This month, I want to update the Members and friends of a number of pending issues.

First, merchandise and the BMTA Store. We have on the way hats and polo shirts. Once they get here, it will be about 7-10 days to get photos, descriptions, web pages designed and the site updated, but we "should" have that on the Website by mid-March. Sorry for the delay.

Second, a lot of folks are curious about the proposed change in the Backcountry Rules for the Smokies. Melissa Coburn, the Backcountry Operations Specialist for the Park, told me last week that the Park has forwarded the results of the public hearings held in August back to the NPS Headquarters in Washington for analysis, with no anticipated date of response. I think that as a practical matter, then, I expect no changes to the current system of some reserved campsites for this coming hiking season. What shape any change will take is still a matter of much speculation, but the BMTA did indicate that, although we in general had no objection to a reasonable fee for backcountry camping, we did not agree with the premise of mandatory reservations because of "massive overcrowding." Other than the AT Corridor thru the Park, we felt and expressed that there was just not enough overcrowding issues to warrant a mandatory reservation system. We are staying in continual contact with the Park and will keep you all informed.

Third, we had a great Federal Land Managers Meeting on February 24th in Cherry Log, GA. For those of you who are wondering, this is an Annual meeting with our partners from each Forest Service District to discuss ongoing issues regarding the Trail. Some key information was that the proposed bridge



over Towee Creek in Tennessee is still active, although Ocoee District Ranger (and former Hydrologist)

Monte Williams indicated that current rules required that the bridge be built to a much higher safety standard than seems reasonable for a simple hiking bridge to cross a stream. He and his staff are working that issue to try to get better clarification on what seems to be a needless complication to the project.

Rick Harris announced that his "Hiking Guide to the BMT in the Smokies" is making much progress, and he anticipates publication in late Spring or early Summer. We will alert the membership thru the Newsletter when we have it available.

Also, it was announced that "Tin Man", who makes a lot of ultra-light weight gear, is expanding his line of strip maps to include the BMT. These maps should be available shortly. These are being done by him personally, and are not a BMTA project.

Cheoah/Tusquittee District Ranger Lauren Stull reported that she has been and still is in contact with NC Department of Transportation regarding the washouts and erosion along the Cherohala Skyway, of which the washout of the BMT near Beech Gap is just one example. Plans are being developed to address this issue, but for the meantime, we

Continued On Next Page

President's Column... Dick Evans

will continue the signed detour along the Skyway for a short distance, although most hikes follow the existing trail and just go downhill a bit and cross the "cavern" at that point.

One very exciting addition to the usual "cast of characters" for the meeting was that Chester Sutherland, Project Manager for the Corridor "K" road work in the Polk County, TN, area and his boss attended the meeting. The BMTA has attended all the public workshops (and some limited attendance ones also) for this project, and is well represented by having Past President Betty Petty on the Citizen Resource Team, so we are being given great opportunities for our views and desires to be presented. Chester reported that a lot of the technical reports are due this Spring, and he anticipates a series of public meetings to discuss their results. The BMTA crosses Route 64 just at the eastern end of the (currently) projected work area, and may or may not be greatly affected by construction in the area. Various underground and bridge construction possibilities have been studied, most dependent on final road grade, and a trail relocation may be the best solution. Chester has been in contact with the BMTA throughout the entire project and I am sure we can develop a solution that works for everyone.

By the way, this year for the Land Managers Meeting, we tried something a bit different. We invited everyone to meet at the Headquarters Cabin to see it, and originally planned a meal there, but chancy weather led to moving the meal and meeting to the Cherry Log Pavilion. The meal, put together by Margaret Evans, Marge Heller and Marge's grand daughters, was very well received, although I did earn Doug Byerly's wrath by giving away the last of the cookies to someone else. All agreed that we are going to do the same next year. The meal proved a great informal opportunity for the USFS Districts to meet, and for BMTA folks to meet our partners. I may be prejudiced, but I think it went very well!

Fourth, there will be an "Extreme Race" on March 3 & 4 over part of the BMT. The Doubletop 100 will offer participants races of several different lengths, but only the

100 Mile Race will involve part of the BMT, from Dyer Gap to Bushy Head Gap and back. Runners are expected to be on that section during the hours of about Noon on the 3rd thru Dawn on the 4th. I know that this sort of thing can be very controversial, and I had a great conversation with Conasauga District Ranger Michele Jones about this. In essence, if you think about it, these will just be hikers who go faster than the average hiker. We certainly do not want "speed limits" on the Trail, so trying to find a distinction is difficult. We were a bit concerned about runners on the course after dark, but as a practical matter, these folks will have covered some 37 miles in about 12 hours before reaching the BMT, so "beginners" will have dropped out long before. In addition, the Race Coordinator is setting time limits for various locations to ensure that folks who cannot maintain a reasonable pace are removed from the course. Likewise, we would certainly oppose any restrictions on hiking after dark, so the Board, by consensus, opted to support the race. Keep in mind that competitive events like this are excluded from designated Wilderness areas, so peace and quiet are preserved in those locations.

Fifth, don't forget the Maintainers Training Session on March 10th at the Ocoee Whitewater Center. Sessions start at 9 AM, and lunch is included. This is designed as a training session for all current and potential section Maintainers, but we do need reservations, as space there is limited. Email "President@bmta.org" and let me know you are coming.

Finally, don't forget the Annual Walk-Thru on March 31st. Go to "<http://www.bmta.org/AnnualWalk-Thru.php>" to see which sections are still available and email us to get on the list. We are going to try to have a get together in both Georgia and Tennessee that evening to exchange information and details of the trips.

See you on the Trail,

Dick Evans

Collaborative Trails Project...Co-Trails

Dear BMTA Member,

As Ralph Heller wrote in the January BMTA Newsletter, we are participating in the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forests Collaborative Trails Strategy where the US Forest Service in Georgia is going thru a process of assessing trails with a number of tools to determine usage and public demand. As part of that process, they have selected a number of Trails in the Georgia National Forest for an initial assessment, and have asked that the BMTA send this information to our membership for your input.



The link below goes to a survey site that asks for various opinions about a number of trails in the area. This is NOT a complete listing of all trails, and most are not part of the Benton MacKaye Trail, but your opinions are highly regarded. For each trail, a number of questions are asked relating to various attributes of the trail.

In the survey, the trails are listed by the USFS Trail Name. There is a small map on the same page to help determine exactly what trail is the subject of that page. There are 61 pages in the survey, so please try this when you have some time to go through it completely. Instructions are on the initial page, and you can bypass trails with which you are not familiar. There is a deadline for input in this part of the process of March 10th, so time is relatively short.

We will continue to inform the membership of the ongoing process and its implications.

Best regards,

Dick Evans

[Survey Link Georgia Trails](#). If the link fails for some reason, here is the direct link:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CONF_Trails





BMTA Trail Construction: Bill Hodge

Editor's Note: Look for more BMTA Board Members to be featured in upcoming Editions. It's a great way to get to know your Board.

Bill Hodge works as the Coordinator of the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) program for the Wilderness Society. This program works across 22 designated Wilderness areas, covering over 250,000 acres. Bill is currently a member of Board of Directors for the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, and is a member of the Society for Wilderness Stewardship's professional development committee. He is Wilderness First Aid Certified, a Leave No Trace Master Educator and a Certified Sawyer. Bill and his wife Laura live in Coker Creek, TN.



BTMA Secretary: Sara Bland

Board Member Sara Bland has always had an interest in fitness and obtained certifications from the American Council on Exercise and attained the Stott Pilates and Power Pilates training to work in the field, as both a personal trainer and class instructor. Sara and her husband Jerry reside in the Lake Arrowhead area of Waleska, GA and enjoy a variety of outdoor activities including a recent biking trip in New Zealand. Their favorite activity is hiking with friends on the BMT. Sara will be leading a few upcoming hikes in the Spring. Look for information on Easy Treks starting this Spring in an upcoming Newsletter.



TN/NC Worktrip-January 29th



This year's Annual Walk-thru is March 31st. Claim Your Section Now for this Year's Event! Details can be found on the Annual Walk-Thru page found at www.bmta.org

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip

January 29, 2012

By Rick Harris, TN/NC Maintenance Director

Thirteen workers came out to work on several problem areas on the BMT in the TN/NC section this Sunday. We moved the trip to Sunday because of the expected rainy weather on Saturday, which never materialized. We broke into 6 different groups to work on various sections, which included.....



Big Frog Mtn Section 11d-e: Jeff Hunter, Caara Fritz, and Bill Hodge climbed a couple of thousand feet up Big Frog to clear a massive deadfall off the trail near the Big Frog Trail / Fork Ridge intersection, and also cleared another 10 trees with crosscut saw on the way back down. Bill Hodge could barely move when he arrived at the restaurant after this grueling trip up and down the big mountain.

Dry Pond Lead Trail Section 12a: Rick Harris and Bill Lundin cleared all logs of the trail with crosscut saw from Kimsey Highway to the Ocoee River, except for one very large pine down near the Ocoee River near the powerline crossing. We left this tree for a chain saw since it was out of wilderness and close to the road. Steve Biatowas cleared this pine for us on Feb 2 with his long-arm chain saw.

John Muir Trail Section 13d-e: Richard Sullivan and Mike O'Brien cut with chain saws 21 trees off the trail from Towee Creek to Loss Creek and also cleared trees off the old John Muir Trail near the powerhouse. Richard and Mike had to wade into fairly deep water to get back across Towee Creek. Sure could use a bridge here!

John Muir Trail Section 13e: John and Zoe Zartis brushed out the JMT from Coker Creek to about a half mile past Loss Creek with gas-powered brush cutters. This was their first experience with the nuclear weed-whackers and they loved the efficiency of these weapons. They are ready for more of the same.

Heart of Darkness Section 16b: Marty Dominy and Lara Winner volunteered to take on the gruesome job of logging out the trail from Sledrunner Gap to Round Top, clearing numerous trees on this remote section of trail with chain saw. Even Marty looked bushed and totally worn out when he arrived for dinner later.

Continued on Next Page

TN/NC Worktrip-January 29th



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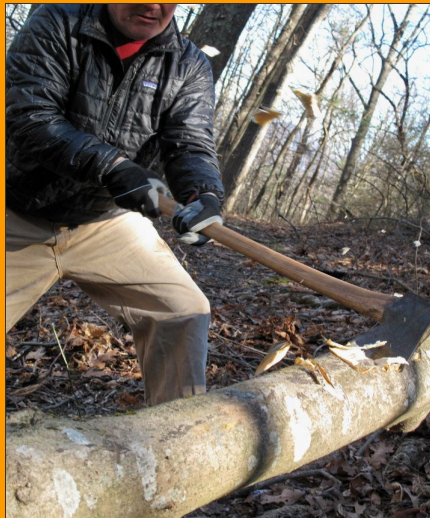
Sycamore Creek Trail Section 17a:

Tom Smith and Rick Foster hiked up to the first switchback on the Sycamore Creek Trail to log out with chain saw saw a complex downfall involving several trees.



After the work day, several of us met at the Mexican restaurant in Copperhill and had fajitas. The restaurant was about to throw us out, I think, because we stayed so long and drank so much liquid in our effort to rehydrate. By the way, the weather was great, in the 50s all day with sunny skies.

And if that were not enough, we got a report later the next week from Richard Sullivan who took the Mountain High Hikers on the BMT from the **Thunder Rock Campground up to FS 221** and reported several trees across the trail. So Rick Harris swindled Richard into meeting us at the Thunder Rock Campground along the Ocoee River on Friday, Feb 3 along with himself, Rick Foster and Tom Smith to clear these trees with chain saw and to completely brush out this section with gas powered brush cutters. This mission was accomplished as well. The trail is now in great shape for the scheduled Cherokee Hiking Club hike on this section scheduled for Feb 11.



One note to anyone looking for a section to adopt. Rick Harris just heard from section maintainers Debbie and Charlie Tucker that they plan to hike the AT this summer and have many other plans, now that they are both retired. So they ask to give up their section, which is **Section 11a from Double Springs Gap at the TN/GA state line up to the top of Big Frog Mountain.** So if any of you would like to take this section, it is officially available. Horses are allowed on this section, so this might be a great section for someone who has a horse and rides in this area. This is wilderness, so it would be best if the new maintainer is crosscut saw certified.



Georgia Work Trip-February 11th

By Tom Keene

It was 34 degrees when we met for breakfast, but the forecast called for a cloudy day with rapidly dropping temperatures. The special bonus --wind gusts up to 30 miles per hour. Oops! Not exactly the "perfect side-hilling weather" yours truly had predicted earlier in the week.

Though several sensible people decided to wait til the next work trip, six hearty souls decided to have a go: Mona Street, Mark Yost, Bill Hamrick, Larry Dumas, David Blount and Tom Keene. Happily, the main work was on the SOUTH face of the ridge between McKenny Gap and Hatley Gap on section eight. We would be out of that wind for the sidehilling.

The problem was getting there. A frigid north wind howled through Hudson Gap where we parked. The north-facing trail in between Hudson and McKenny was not much better. Mercifully, the south-facing work-site beyond McKenny was much better. During and after lunch we even had brief spells of the promised sunny weather - though the temperature never broke out of the 20s.

Despite the cold, we got quite a lot done. Mark Yost and Larry Dumans, recently certified sawyers, paired up to remove no less than a dozen blowdowns and then joined the rest of us to focus on the sidehill work that George Owen had flagged earlier in the week. Thanks to all who took part - and also to those who cleared the day to work but, quite reasonably, thought better of it given the weather.

Reminder: The Section Maintainers Workshop Saturday 10 March, so no Georgia work trip in March. We will be back in April 14 to finish the No Name Gap reroute. Be there! TK



*The clear-
est way
into the
universe is
through a
forest wil-
derness."
-John Muir*

Christopher Beck's Eagle Service Project ...

By Richard Harris

Christopher Beck's Eagle Service Project was a great success. 45 people in all came together with Chris and members of his Sweetwater Boy Scout Troop to rejuvenate a trail around a pond down along US 64 and Lake Ocoee (aka Parksville Lake). After signins, Chris did a tailgate safety talk, then split us up into small groups to work on the trail. There were loppers, draggers, trash-pickers, and sidehillers. The loppers went through first to clear the corridor of limbs and briars, etc, the draggers pulled all the limbs etc off the trail, the trash-pickers did just that (several bags worth) and the sidehillers rebuild the tread with pulaski's, fire rakes, hoes, and other such tools. By the end of the work day, everyone was out using the sidehilling tools finishing off the trail. The various members of the Cherokee Hiking Club, BMTA and SABCH helped show the small work crews how to do it right and safely. Steve Biatowas, USFS Trails Tech for the Ocoee District was there all day as well. We were done in the early afternoon.



Then we all got together for some talk about trail building and the like. Steve Biatowas handed out some of his annual awards as well. Then we all went to the Beck's home for chili and other goodies and more talk and fun.

Thanks to all of you who helped Chris make this a successful project. There are two younger Beck kids who will be earning their Eagle in the next year or so and other scouts in the same troop. So, I would guess there will be more similar Eagle Service Projects we will be asked to help with.

I believe the Ocoee-Hiwassee District of the USFS should bend on their rules and allow Chris to put a small brass plaque on the trail sign indicating that this trail was rehabilitated by Chris Beck and his Boy Scout Troop on Feb 18, 2011 as an Eagle Service Project. I have seen other such signs in other areas of the National Forest. For example, along the Warriors Passage National Recreation Trail in the Tellico Ranger District.