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 State Rep TN: Vacant
 State Rep NC: **Vacant**

Suspension Bridge over the Toccoa River:
 By Ralph Heller



VOLUME 29, ISSUE 11 OCTOBER 27, 2012

2012 BMTA ANNUAL MEETING

November 10, 2012

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this year's annual meeting which will be held Saturday, November 10, 2012. The venue will be the North Georgia Community Center which is located on Industrial Boulevard in Ellijay,



North Georgia Community Center

Georgia. This location is very convenient to Georgia Highway 515, being within a couple of blocks of the Hardees and Food Lion, both of which are visible from "the big road." (See driving directions below)

Come participate in the election of officers for the 2013 Board of Directors and enjoy a hike or two and dinner with your fellow trail supporters. The annual meeting is a great opportunity to put down the tools and fellowship with existing friends and to make new friends. It is the best opportunity of the year to meet the directors, ask questions, and learn more about the history and purpose of the Association and the Trail.

An informative presentation and the business meeting will commence at 4:30 PM. A lasagna dinner, including salad, bread, and beverages will be served at 6 PM for a cost of \$15.00 per person. When making your reservation please specify if you want meat or vegetarian lasagna.

Log In To bmta.org For More Information

BMTA Annual Meeting Hikes, November 9-11

Join us for all or any or all of the four hikes planned for over the three days of the BMTA Annual Meeting weekend. Annual meeting coordinator David Blount suggested we trek some other trails in the area besides just the usual BMTA, and we liked the idea. The information below provides you with the hike information, including meeting place and time. No advance registration is required. None are in wilderness, so there is no limitation based on that. **Times listed are departure times** – don't be later than that at the meeting place. (Please also note that while most hikes depart from the meeting place by 9:00 a.m., the [Friday hike](#) departs an hour later, at 10:00 a.m.)

Fri., Nov. 9 – Stanley Creek Road at Fall Branch Falls Trailhead to Weaver Creek Road.

Rated moderately difficult, with a 1,350-foot climb in the first half.

This 6.1-mile hike quickly arrives at Fall Branch Falls platform for relaxed viewing. Then we continue uphill on the Benton MacKaye Trail to the high point of the near-summit of Rocky Mountain at 3,350, eventually dropping out over Scroggin Knob to Weaver Creek Road's hike terminus. Meet in the northeast corner of the Blue Ridge Home Depot off GA Hwy. 5 just north of Hwy. 515 (and behind Dairy Queen) by 10 a.m..

Sara Bland, Leader

Sat., Nov. 10 – Amicalola Falls State Park Short Hikes

Rated easy – This will be a pleasant jaunt around this over-700-foot fall (in several cascades) inside the state park. Park fee or pass required.

Bits of several short trails will be experienced, as well as a visit to the Appalachian Trail display at the park headquarters and to the beautiful lodge atop the falls. Distance covered of between three and five easy miles will be determined by the group. Meet at the North Georgia Community Center 0.4 miles west of Hardees on U.S. 76 in Ellijay by 9:00 a.m.

Ralph Heller, Leader



BMTA Annual Meeting Hikes, November 9-11

Sat., Nov. 10 – Hike Inn Trail Longer Hike – Rated moderate

– Depending on time and inclination of the group, the hike will be on the Hike Inn Trail from Amicalola Falls part-way out to the now famous Hike Inn. Since there will not be enough time to go all the way (we are due back no later than mid-afternoon), we will turn around after 3-4 miles and return (6-8 miles total). Along the way the hike leader will make a five-minute presentation on the Hike Inn and give all a brochure on this wonderful destination. There are a couple good vistas on the way with some up and down, but no long, hard climbs. Meet at the North Georgia Community Center 0.4 miles west of Hardees on U.S. 76 in Ellijay by 9:00 a.m.



George Owen, Leader

Sun., Nov. 11 – Pinhoti Trail from Cohutta Overlook & Hwy. 52 to Mulberry Gap Road (and Maybe

Beyond) – Rated moderately easy – This 3.6-mile hike is part of the newest of four major interstate trails in North Georgia (a fifth is underway). The Pinhoti Trail runs from the Benton MacKaye Trail to central Alabama. Your leader for this venture is one of the founders of the Georgia Pinhoti Trail who also laid out much of the Peach State route. There may be an option at the end of the hike to venture a bit further eastward on the Pinhoti from the hike's eastern terminus if some in the group would like to do so. Meet at the North Georgia Community Center 0.4 miles west of Hardees on U.S. 76 in Ellijay by 9:00 a.m.



Marty Dominy, Leader

My Side Of The Campfire...Dick Evans

As my term as President of this great organization draws to a close, I want to pass on a few thoughts. As many of you know, I did a thru-hike of the trail, although family issues left me a couple sections short of completing it. Regardless, it was a really terrific experience. I will be speaking more about it at the Annual Meeting, but a few general thoughts here might be appropriate. Overall, the Trail is in great shape, better than I really expected. I ran into one section (since remedied) with a lot of blow downs, and one section with heavy briars, but the rest of the trail was a pleasure to hike. Certainly, there were occasional blow downs, but that is to be expected on a wilderness trail, and most presented no obstacle to travel, so big thanks to the trail maintainers who are doing a great job keeping up with nature. Additionally, despite concerns, I had no navigation problems on the Trail. I used a combination of Bob Ruby's Databook, Rick Harris' Guidebooks and Ernie Engman's Thru Hikers Guide, as well as the National Geographic Maps. Each had good points, but none of these individually had all the information necessary for my trip. The combination provided the information I needed for the trip. During the hiking, I used the NatGeo Maps extensively, and had no problem determining where the trail was going. Overall, the sections with blazes were well blazed, although some might be somewhat faded, but still recognizable. In the wilderness areas, following the trace on the ground was fine, but I certainly understand others having trouble following this, and certainly under a light coating of snow, those clues to the trail's direction would be lost. A few of these areas we might consider raising with our Forest Service partners to discuss whether "reassurance markings" might be appropriate to avoid folks getting lost.



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My Side Of The Campfire...Dick Evans

Trail junctions with signs are not located close enough to rely on those for navigation, and some of those are missing, adding to the possible confusion. We are also involved in a program of replacement of missing signs near trail heads, etc., which will help address those issues. Overall, the hike was great, but thru hiking does present some situations that shorter section hiking does not. Most of our trail heads are quite far from any resupply stores, etc., and this is a big problem for those trying to complete the entire trail on foot without vehicular support of some type. My wife drove over 1200 miles in support of my 300 miles of hiking, meeting me at remote trail heads, etc. Likewise, I found that cell coverage was mostly non-existent over the length of the trail, so trying to coordinate meetings would be tough without means to communicate. I don't look for these issues to be addressed anytime soon. That said, however, it remains a great Trail, and I certainly recommend that everyone hike as much of it as they can, however they are able to do it. Thru hikes are certainly not for everyone, but with the Section Guides, most folks can do most sections of the trail in a fairly easy fashion. Just get out there and do it!

I would like to thank all those who helped and supported the Trail during my term. We have an amazing group of people who deeply believe in the Trail and what it means. Everyone gets something different from a hike on the Trail, and everyone puts a little bit different effort into helping to keep the Trail going, but you are all essential in "leaving a footpath for generations to follow."

It has been a distinct honor and privilege to serve as your President.

Now, I may have more time to actually "See you on the Trail."

Dick Evans



Eric Eades Sends Greetings. . .

Many BMTA Members and friends have asked about Eric Eades since his medical condition surfaced recently. I just heard from Eric and he passed on this news.....Dick Evans

Dear Dick,

Getting a 1:30 AM phone call from Emory came as a surprise to me; I was not expecting such for months! The nurse at the other end of the phone asked how quickly I can be at Emory, and I told her I can probably be "wheels up" within the hour (45 min., more like). I was in pre-op before 1st light, and by 1:30 PM, my body was adjusting well to my new liver. I was out of the hospital in 8 days, and according to the docs, making remarkable progress. They asked me if I had any idea why, and I said it was probably due to this horrible task-master duo named Dick and Rick. But I digress; a story for some other time perhaps. My incision from my sternum to the gizzards is healing quickly, and I've been out of the hospital since the 3rd (of October). My abdominal muscles are still sore, but they must be allowed to heal in due time. I am so very grateful for good friends and family, and also humbled and eternally grateful to the unfortunate donor, and his/her family. I hope to see all at the annual meeting. I will try to let you know, but St. Simons Island is a bit of a "fer piece" to the mountains. I am expected to show my smiling face in the Emory clinic twice a month, once I'm released to go home, so it may end up well for me to attend. Don't expect much from me, work-wise, for a while, but I can't wait until I'm able to.

Your friend, Eric Eades

BMT Patches and Rockers...by Dick Evans

Hikers on the Benton MacKaye Trail now have a new Rocker for their Benton MacKaye Trail Patch. Folks who have hiked the entire 500+ mile figure-eight formed by the Benton MacKaye Trail and the southern section of the Appalachian Trail may now order the "500 Miler" Rocker to proudly wear. This hike can be any direction, any order with no time specified-you just have to hike the entire Benton MacKaye Trail AND the Appalachian Trail between Springer Mountain and Davenport Gap. To order the Thru Hiker, 300 Miler or 500 Miler patches, you must fill out and submit the "Trail Completion Form, found at <http://www.bmta.org/pdfs/TrailCompletionFormBMT.pdf>



which verifies your accomplishment, then go the Patches Section of the BMTA Store and order the appropriate patch or rocker. The background color on the 500 Miler Rocker is a bit different from the others, but if you have hiked 500 miles, we doubt that it would be a concern.

Save Georgia's Hemlocks is one of Top 3 Finalists for Atlanta's 2012 Cox Conserves Heroes Award

Ralph Heller, Past President of the BMTA, is proud to announce that SGH and its founder of this great non-profit organization has earned a spot as a Finalist in Cox Conserves Heroes contest. Created in partnership with The Trust for Public Land the program recognizes local, non-profit volunteers.



"It is a great honor to be recognized for our work to save the Hemlocks from the invasive insect that is attacking them," Donna Shearer said.

In [September 2009](#), Heller asked Donna to present a program on saving the Hemlocks to a group of BMTA members and residents in the Cherry Log, GA area. This was the beginning of a partnership. Since then, the BMTA and SGH have partnered to treat hundreds of Hemlocks along parts of the BMT and most recently in the National Forest.

The public is invited to watch Finalist videos and vote on-line for their favorite. **Please vote, by Monday, [October 29th](#), for Donna and Save Georgia's Hemlocks! www.wsbtv.com/coxconservesheroes**



Contact: Dave Teffeteller
404-895-3940
dave@ellijay.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 2, 2012

Hike & Help the Hemlocks event held

Save Georgia's Hemlocks (SGH) and the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) partnered again this year to hold their annual Hike & Help the Hemlocks event on Saturday, September 29. By all accounts, it was a great success. Thirty participants treated hemlocks for the hemlock woolly adelgid in the Noontootla area of Fannin County, while twenty BMTA Easy Trekkers enjoyed an invigorating 4.4 mile hike in the woods. At lunchtime, the two groups shared a picnic beside beautiful Long Creek Falls.

After lunch, the group heard several brief presentations. Jim Wentworth (U. S. Forest Service) gave an update on conditions in the national forest and efforts being made to save the hemlocks. Ralph Heller (BMTA) reported on their recent and upcoming hikes and trail maintenance activities. And Barry Henson (Go Outdoors USA) described their work in the Dick's Creek and Noontootla areas. Ralph Artigliere (Blue Ridge Trout Unlimited) introduced their Trout Adventure Trail, an exciting new educational initiative that will be ready for rollout this fall. And Amanda Rose Newton (new manager of the North Georgia predator beetle lab) brought us up to date on biological controls to combat the woolly adelgid, including a new beetle that will be announced soon.

Special thanks go out to all who participated, and an invitation is extended to everyone for the next volunteer hemlock treatment project scheduled for Saturday, November 10 in the Helton Creek Falls area. For more information, please visit www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org and www.bmta.org.



Hikers led by the BMTA enjoyed an "Easy Trek."



Five teams of volunteers led by SGH treated the hemlocks.

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Joseph Lowery, Matthew Bollinger, Nancy Hosler



Long Creek Falls



Donna Shearer of SGH



Ralph Heller, BMTA



**Ralph Artigliere
Trout Adventure Trail**



Jim Wentworth, Wildlife Biologist for U.S. Forest Service and his former forestry professor at UGA, Walt Cook. Walt is one of the original BMTA members having attended the first planning meeting of the BMT.

Sitting On The Porch... by Marge Heller

On the first two Saturdays in October, members sat on the porch of BMTA Headquarters in Blue Ridge and shared information on the trail, group hikes and trail maintenance. Over twenty interested hikers stopped by. Sincere thanks to our members who helped Ralph & me: T.O. & Jan Mitchell, Mike Pivlinsky, and Walter Polk.



**Victoria and David Kelsey
of Palm Coast, FL
And
Ralph & Marge Heller**

**Not Pictured is Walter
Polk taking the photo.**

44th Annual Autumn Gold Festival: by Marge Heller

TN/NC BMTA Maintenance Director Rick Harris represented our trail once again at Coker Creek, TN's Annual Autumn Gold Festival. Rick introduced the new Benton MacKaye Trail wall map and BMT Trail Guide/Smokies Section that he authored with Ernest Engman and Kim Hainge.

Keeping Rick company at the Booth were Sarge Foster* and Jake Harris.

***Sarge was recently adopted. If you are interested in finding a great dog for you, please contact the Monroe County Animal Shelter.**



Spreading The Word On The BMT...Darcy Douglas

I was asked to write a short article about what I've been up to outside the BMTA. For those of you who don't know, I have been very active in the BMTA since 1982. I've served on the board most years since 1985, having been President 4 years (2 different terms). The newsletter, the treasury, the database I began in 1985, and building trail were always in the forefront of my activities. I must say, though, that being in charge of Maintenance, which was then the entire trail, was my favorite!

In the last year, I have done some traveling, it's true. I traveled to Atlanta in my trusty van (the Miata spent the time in Florida with my cousin), traveled across the USA once again, and boarded a ferry in Bellingham, Washington, bound



Darcy in Czech Republic with my daughter and granddaughter

for Anchorage. It was too late in the season to drive the Alaska Highway alone! While I couldn't hike on the ferry, the views were beyond spectacular!!! Why, you may ask, did I go to Alaska in the winter????? The northern lights is the short answer. They can't be seen in summer, with so many hours of daylight. I knew this would be a big sunspot year, meaning great auroras, so picked this year to go. I was right about all that, but there were lots more after I left than while I was there, darn it!



Northern lights in Fairbanks

Sometime in October I got a call from my son that my 4th grandchild was expected in May. Well, no way was I going to miss that!!!! Getting out of Alaska is tricky in winter. The car ferry runs very occasionally and there are long layovers in towns waiting for the next one. I was fortunate to get on one, and it was covered with ice, sometimes in gale force winds, for the duration of the trip. Exciting! Oh, while waiting in Juneau, I went underneath the Mendenhall Glacier, the one most folks see on cruises. That was a first, could have easily been fatal, but the pictures are amazing!!!



Cave underneath the Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau

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I've been to Texas to help Dad get ready for his move to the retirement home, to Denver to support my brother for his son's wedding, and then to Prague to visit my daughter and her husband and baby. The trips to Indiana for those grandkids go without saying. All my grandchildren are perfect, of course. They may not be perfect children, but they ARE perfect grandchildren!! Ask me sometime if you want to hear some funny stories!!!

It is good to be back in Georgia and to be back on the Benton MacKaye Trail. I have half of my section back to maintain, and have helped others on theirs, too. I am playing the organ a lot, and have a few piano gigs, and a student, so the music part of life is busy, too. It's great to be part of such a wonderful organization!!! Thanks to all of you who help make it so!



Trumpeter swans resting up before heading south for winter



Ducks and one goose in Anchorage

TN/NC BMTA Work-Trip - October 6 , 2012

Saturday, October 6, 2012 - BMTA TN/NC Work Trip - BMT Section 19a - Farr Gap to Slickrock Creek - Six of us suffered the cold, misty drizzle to clear the BMT of logs and do some brushing out on this section. Dick Evans was planning on meeting us at Farr Gap to join us off his BMT thru-hike, but he was nowhere to be seen, though there were lot of hunters out to bag their bear. Later we learned by email from Dick that he was indeed there, but asleep in his car up the road a ways. When he awoke, he asked around and found we had left down the trail "a long time ago". I guess he was pretty exhausted from his thru-hike and needed his sleep. Anyhoo, we encountered several quite large trees across the trail on the upper section which all had to be cleared with crosscut saw. We got maybe halfway down the mountain before turning around. In discussions with hunters we were told the trail was in good shape except down near Slickrock Creek where brushing out was needed. So we will save this for a later trip by coming in from Cheoah Dam. Volunteer hours were as follows:

Name	Travel Hours	Work Hours	Totals
Rick Harris	0.5	6	6.5
Tom Smith	1	6	7
Steve Cartwright	1.5	6	7.5
Bill Hodge	1	6	7
Peter Reber	1.5	6	7.5
Aaron Sanford	1	6	7
TOTALS	6.5	36	42.5



TN/NC BMTA Work-Trip - October 9 & 10, 2012

Tuesday, October 9, 2012 - BMT Section 12b - Near Kimsey Highway - Following information from Dick Evans that the area under the power line on Kimsey Hwy was very overgrown and it was hard to find the trail, I went up there **today** and brushed out the overgrown plants and planted a new BMT directional sign to help people find their way.

Name	Travel Hours	Work Hours	Totals
Rick Harris	2	1	3



Wednesday, October 10, 2012 - BMT Section 16d - Upper Bald River section - Rick put a BMT directional sign on the post at the intersection of the Brookshire Creek Trail and BMT heading up the Bald River valley since this is a site where some backpackers in the past have been confused, not understanding that the BMT is Trail #2.

Name	Travel Hours	Work Hours	Totals
Rick Harris	1.5	3	4.5



TN/NC BMTA Work-Trip - October 13, 2012

Saturday, October 13, 2012 - BMT Section 14a - TN68 to Coker Creek



John and Zoe Zardis worked with Steve Biatowas to remove the two big trees that were left behind from our [9/2/12](#) chainsaw work trip. We needed Steve's expertise and additional equipment to do the job. The first big tree was a beautiful red oak whose root system was compromised. We only had a 16 inch bar chainsaw with us so Steve and John got on both sides of the tree to cut it. When it was set free, the trunk stood back up! The second tree was also large and was suspended above the trail. Steve instructed John on how/where to cut through the mess of branches at

the top of the tree. Once the tree was dislodged and laying on the trail, John and Zoe were able to saw on both sides of it. Several cuts needed to be made and Steve's pry bar made it possible for us to roll the large logs off the trail and down the hill. There were also 2 more small trees that were obstructing the trail that were removed. Some areas of the trail are eroding and need to be rebuilt. This will be the focus of a future work trip.

Name	Travel Hours	Work Hours	Totals
John Zartas	0.5	6	6.5
Zoe Zartis	0.5	6	6.5
Steve Biatowas (USFS)	(0.5)	(6)	(6.5)
Volunteer Totals	1.0	12	13



TN/NC BMTA Worktrip - October 19, 2012

Friday, October 19, 2012 - BMT Sections 12c-d - Kimsey Hwy to Lost Creek - We logged out this 7 mile section completely today. It had been reported by Dick Evans on his thru-hike of the BMT that this section had many, many logs across the trail, presumably from the big wind storm of **July 5**. We broke up into 4 separate sawyer groups: group 1 logged (Richard Sullivan, Steve Cartwright) logged from Lost Creek Campground south. Group 2 (Rick Harris, Steve Biatowas) logged from McFarland Road north, till they met Group 1. Group 3 (Dick Evans, Kim Hainge, Betty Petty, and Ralph Van Pelt) logged the areas immediately north and south of McFarland Road. Group 4 (Marc Bernatti, Tom Smith) logged out from Kimsey Hwy north toward McFarland Road till they met Group 3. In all probably 75 trees were cleared off the trail by all 4 crews. Otherwise the trail is in fairly good shape. Many of the trees were large oaks 24" or more in diameter, unfortunately.

Totals volunteer hours.....71



Before



After

Georgia Work-Trip Changed... Tom Keene

BMT Members and Friends,

The BMTA annual meeting is set for Nov. 10, the second Saturday, our usual day for the GA work-trip. (Need details? See the BMTA homepage (<http://www.bmta.org/>).

To avoid a conflict with the annual meeting , we have moved the Ga work-trip to the first Saturday, Nov. 3.

Details below.

Join us! Record the football. It should be a beautiful day in the woods!

TK

Georgia Work Trip, Nov. 3: [Nota bene, the November work-trip is on the FIRST Saturday this year because the BMTA Annual Meeting is on the Second Saturday, Nov. 10.]

We will build and refresh water diversions in the vicinity of the trail relocation near No Name Gap on Section 2. Meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 AM or meet at the Three Forks trailhead at 9:20 AM. (Note: Trail-head meeting time is 20 minutes later than customary because of the long drive from BlueRidge in to Three Forks) The trip leaders are Tom Keene (cell) 770-548-4935, and George Owen (home) 706-374-4716 or (cell) 706-897-3366.

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Tom Keene

Georgia Maintenance Director

Benton MacKaye Trail



BMTA Welcomes Its New Members...

Julie Raming	Talking Rock, GA
Tim Mulroy	Alpharetta, GA
Adam Shields	Marietta, GA
Charles & Kay Brown	Marietta, GA
Chase & Ryan Deits	Lawrenceville, GA
Barry Allen	Suwannee, GA
Jack Dugger	Blairsville, GA
Nathan KcKee	Ooltewah, TN
Mick Boyle	Tierra Verde, FL
Chris Gentile	Marietta, GA
Linda Hinson	Ellijay, GA
Daniel & Debbie Nennstiel	Monticello, FL
Robert Hunlock	Douglasville, GA
Randy Simpson	Ellijay, GA
Ernest Arvesen	Marietta, GA
Terry Palmer	Lawrenceville, GA
Will Irvin	Marietta, GA
Barbara Newell	Morganton, GA
Eric Hedden	Ellijay, GA
Thomas W. Claxton	Guyton, GA
Mark & Janet Fried	Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Greetings from your Membership Director.

It is now the time to start thinking about renewing your annual membership with the BMTA. Non-Life Memberships run concurrent with our organization's fiscal year, January through December. Members joining in October, November or December are credited through the next full calendar year and renewals received in those same months are credited the same way. Please go to the www.bmta.org and click on the "membership" link. From that page you will have the opportunity to pay via Paypal or you can also print off a renewal form and pay via check, whichever you prefer.

Thank you for your support of our trail.

Vic Fredlund, Membership Director

Backcountry Changes Set for 2013



Dana Soehn
Management Assistant
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Great Smoky Mountains National Park will implement changes to its current backcountry reservation and permitting process early next year. As reported last March, the National Park Service approved the Park's proposal to begin collecting fees for use of the Park's backcountry campsites and shelters. The changes include a \$4 per person per night fee for backcountry camping. The fee will be used to provide increased customer service for backcountry trip planning, reservations, permits and the backcountry experience.

A park-specific reservation and permit system, to which users will have 24/7 access, will allow backcountry campers to make reservations and obtain permits online from anywhere internet access is available. Reservations may be made at any time up to 30 days in advance, allowing maximum flexibility for those making last minute plans. Backcountry users will no longer be required to call the Backcountry Office to obtain reservations. Reservation and permit requests will also be accepted in person at the Backcountry Office, which is located at the Sugarlands Visitor Center.

Backcountry Office hours will be expanded with additional staff available to provide trip planning assistance both over the phone and in person. In addition, Park Rangers assigned exclusively to the backcountry will provide enhanced enforcement for issues such as wildlife violations and food storage.

"It is anticipated the online reservation and permit system will be available to the public within the first few months of 2013," says Superintendent Dale Ditmanson. "We will provide notification of a specific implementation date later this year."

For more information about the changes, please visit the Park's website at www.nps.gov/grsm and follow the Management link on the left side of the page or call the Park's Public Information Office at 865-436-1207. For general backcountry information or backcountry reservations, call the Backcountry Office at 865-436-1297.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park Backcountry Fee Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Great Smoky Mountains National Park implementing a fee for backcountry camping?

The fee will be used to provide increased customer service for backcountry trip planning, reservations, permitting and to improve the backcountry experience.

How much is the fee?

The fee will be \$4 per person per night, with a maximum of cost of \$20 per person per permit, for up to seven nights.

How will customer service be improved?

Backcountry users will have 24/7 access to an online reservation and permitting system. The system will allow users to make reservations and obtain permits online and print backcountry permits from anywhere internet access is available.

The reservation and permitting system will allow users to view campsite capacity and availability for every backcountry campsite and shelter in the park.

24/7 access to the reservation and permitting system will allow backcountry users to obtain reservations and permits at any time starting 30 days in advance of a trip. The “up to the minute” capability of the reservation and permitting system will allow maximum flexibility for those making last minute plans to camp in the backcountry.

Backcountry Office hours will be expanded to provide increased access to trip planning assistance over the phone or in person. Permits may also be obtained in person in the Backcountry Office, which is located at the Sugarlands Visitor Center.

Park Ranger's assigned solely to backcountry patrol will provide enhanced enforcement for issues such as wildlife violations and food storage.

How will the changes affect my reservation, permitting and backcountry experience?

Currently, backcountry users must obtain a free permit for all overnight stays in the backcountry. Backcountry users are also required to make reservations for all shelters and some campsites by calling the Backcountry Office. Because of limited staff, multiple calls are usually required before one can actually speak to Backcountry Office staff to make a reservation.

Once changes are implemented, backcountry users will be able to obtain reservations and print permits at their convenience through an online system which may be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Backcountry users will also be able to more reliably reach staff in the Backcountry Office for assistance with trip planning.

Are there any other benefits?

Yes. Through a combination of education and enforcement, park rangers assigned exclusively to the backcountry are expected to lead to better compliance with regulations and Leave No Trace ethics. Increased compliance with regulations and Leave No Trace also helps protect and preserve resources, such as wildlife, that most visitors highly value. All backcountry users stand to benefit from the changes.

In addition, by making all sites reservation-only, the new reservation system will have the capability to notify permit holders of site closures, safety issues and other emergency conditions via email and text messaging prior to beginning their trip.

Will I be able to purchase an annual backcountry camping pass?

Backcountry fees will be collected under authority of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). FLREA permits the creation of annual passes for park entrance fees but not other fees, such as backcountry use fees. Great Smoky Mountains National Park does not have an entrance fee.

Will there be a reduced fee for children or for residents of Tennessee or North Carolina?

Under FLREA, children younger than 16 years of age are exempt from entrance fees but not other fees, such as those for backcountry use. FLREA does not authorize reduced fees for residents of states contiguous to the National Park.

Will the park institute a per person limit for backcountry fees paid in one year?

There will not be an annual, per person fee limit. However, there will be a per person fee limit of \$20.00 per permit, for up to seven nights.

Has the park considered charging for shelter use only, or only charging for sites that are currently on the reservation system?

Yes. The park has considered a variety of possibilities. Including all sites offers the best opportunity for improving customer service and the backcountry experience. The reservation and permitting system will allow backcountry users to check availability for and reserve any site or shelter in the National Park.

Will I be able to obtain a refund or make changes to my itinerary?

Refunds will be offered as a result of campsite closures and events such as prolonged road or trail closures due to significant weather events.

Itinerary changes may be made by contacting the Backcountry Office. Backcountry permit holders may make changes one time, per permit, without incurring additional fees.

Will there be a change to the annual maximum number of nights one can stay in the backcountry?

The park regulation limiting overnight backcountry stays to 30 nights per trip and 60 nights per year will not change. Permits may be obtained for up to 7 nights. Additional permits may be obtained for those wanting to camp more than 7 nights at one time.

Can the reservation system be used to disseminate messages about closures, challenges of the park's backcountry, food storage or Leave No Trace?

Yes. The new reservation/permit system will automatically send an email message and/or text message to those holding reservations for sites that have been closed. Food storage instructions, general guidance about the challenges of the park's backcountry and Leave No Trace, as well as other educational and safety information will also be included in the system.

What is the timeframe for implementing the fee and new reservation/permitting system?

It is anticipated the online reservation and permitting system will be available to the public within the first few months of 2013. The fee will be implemented at that time.

How can I get more information?

For more information about the changes to backcountry reservations and permitting, contact the Public Affairs Office at Great Smoky Mountains National Park: 865-436-1207.

For general information about the backcountry, backcountry trip planning assistance or backcountry reservations, call the Backcountry Office at 865-436-1297.



Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

*You are cordially invited to attend
a gathering of fun, food and fellowship
in your honor
for an outstanding commitment
of volunteerism and dedication to
a diverse, sustainable trail system on
the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.*

Saturday, October 27, 2012

11:30 a.m. ~ 2:00 p.m.

*Laurel Park, Pavilion #1
3100 Cleveland Highway
Gainesville, GA 30501*

*Please bring a dish to share, and feel free to bring
the loved ones who support your efforts.*

*RSVP to Larry Thomas at (770) 297-3030 or lrthomas@fs.fed.us
before October 25, 2012.*

