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

Suspension Bridge over the Toccoa River:  
 By Ralph Heller



VOLUME 29, ISSUE 10

OCTOBER 1, 2012

# 2012 BMTA ANNUAL MEETING MAKE YOUR DINNER RESERVATIONS NOW!

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.

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## 2012 BMTA ANNUAL MEETING

Payment on Paypal will be available soon. Or, you can make your check payable to BMTA and send to:

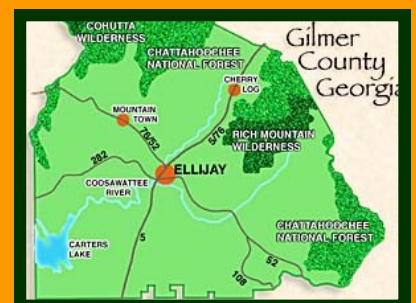
**BMTA**  
**PO Box 6**  
**Cherry Log, GA 30522**

At the time of payment, please also send me an e-mail to [bmtahiker@aol\(dot\)com](mailto:bmtahiker@aol.com) with your name and the names of any guests you are paying for and specify the meat or vegetarian option for each. Dinner reservations and payment need to be received by November 1 so that we may finalize dinner arrangements. Look for a posting soon on the website ([www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org)) for the hike schedule and for a paypal option for making the meal reservations. As always, there is no charge to attend the business meeting of the association and your attendance and participation is welcomed and encouraged. I look forward to seeing you there!

Driving directions from Atlanta: Take Hwy 575/515 north to East Ellijay. After passing the McDonalds on your left, turn left at the next traffic light by the Hardees (Hwy 76.) Go 300 feet and turn left just before the river onto Industrial Blvd/Hwy 76. Go approximately 0.4 miles and the North Georgia Community Center will be on your left adjacent to the North Georgia Medical Center. Use 822 Industrial Blvd, Ellijay, Georgia for your GPS.

Driving directions from Blue Ridge/Murphy/Copper Hill: Take Hwy 76/515 south from Blue Ridge to the first traffic light in East Ellijay at the Hardees on your right. Turn right on Hwy 76 and go 300 feet. Turn left just before the river onto Industrial Blvd/Hwy 76. Go approximately 0.4 miles and the North Georgia Community Center will be on your left adjacent to the North Georgia Medical Center. Use 822 Industrial Blvd, Ellijay, Georgia for your GPS.

David Blount  
Annual Meeting Chairperson



# NEW Benton MacKaye Trail Guide: Smokies Section Has Arrived!

By Marge Heller

At the Southeast Foot Trails Coalition conference, September 20-23, in Falls Creek Falls State Park in TN, Richard Harris introduced the **NEW** Smokies Section Trail Guide for the Benton MacKaye Trail.



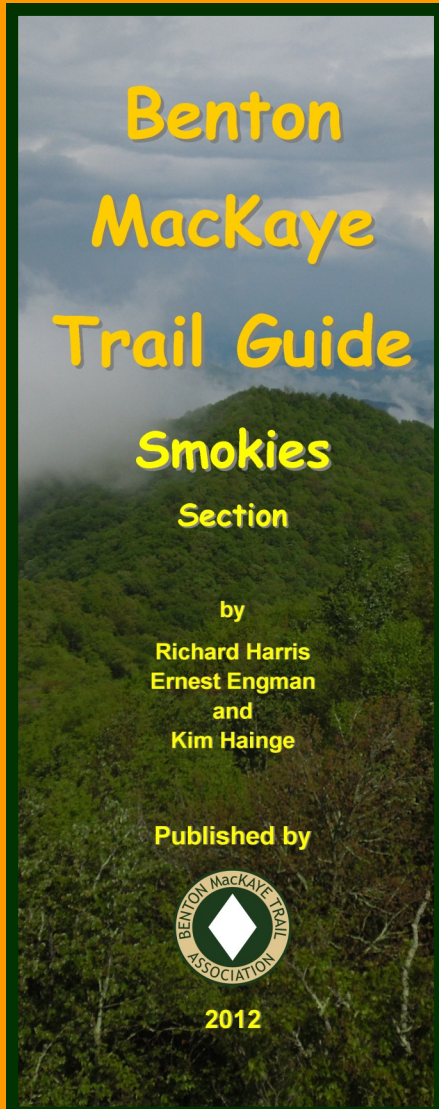
Rick Harris

Harris, BMT TN/NC Maintenance Director, had assistance from members

Ernest Engman and Kim Hainge, in putting together the last book in the series. Previously published were the Georgia Section and TN/NC Sections.

The authors wish to thank the members of the BMTA who helped with the project, especially Bob Ruby, GA Representative and Richard Evans, President. Appreciation is also given to Brenda Harris for her review of the manuscript and for putting up with her spouse while working on the newest Trail Guide.

To purchase the Smokies Trail Guide, see the BMTA Store on [www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org). Georgia and TN/NC Trail Guides are also on-line. **Be the first to own all 3 BMT Trail Guides!**



2012



## My Side Of The Campfire

I had the opportunity earlier this month to attend the formal designation of Ellijay/Gilmer County, GA., as an Appalachian Trail Town. This is a program by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to create awareness of the AT and its benefits to the local community (That's a real short explanation, there is a lot more to the full program). I think it is a great way to show how trails can be an asset to local areas. As a practical matter, the ATC Program includes towns near the AT, but the SEFTC is developing a similar program for other towns that are near other trails, like the Benton MacKaye Trail. If you live in a town near a trail and want to get involved in this, email me at "[President@bmta.org](mailto:President@bmta.org)" and I'll be glad to put you in touch with the right group for your location.



in-  
lo-

IN BMTA news, by the time you read this, the Guide to the BMT in the Smokies should be released and available for purchase. We will have all the materials, guides, etc., on hand at the Annual Meeting in November, or you can use the BMTA Store on the website. This release means that now, thanks to Rick Harris, Liz Carter, Kim Hainge, Ernie Engman and others, we now have a full set of three Guides covering the entire Trail, and they are a big asset to hikers using the Trail. The Guides have driving directions to Trailheads as well as maps, water locations, possible campsites and brief trail descriptions. My personal thanks to all those who have worked so hard to get these published.

On a personal note, as my term as President is drawing to a close, I have decided to attempt a Thru-Hike on the Benton MacKaye Trail. If all has gone well, by the time you read this, I will be nearing Springer Mountain on the southern section of the hike. For logistical reasons, I am starting on the Cherohala Skyway and heading south, then going to Big Creek in the Smokies and heading southbound thru the Smokies, and ending up with a traverse of the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness. Hopefully in next month's Newsletter, I will have a trip report. In the meantime, I hope everyone enjoys the great weather that October brings. Get out there and "take a hike!"

See you on the Trail!

Dick Evans

## Save Georgia's Hemlocks is one of Top 3 Finalists for ATLANTA'S 2012 COX CONSERVES HEROES Award

By Marge Heller

Ralph Heller, Past President of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, and Bob Pledger, Vice Chairman of Save Georgia's Hemlocks, are proud to announce that SGH and Donna Shearer, founder of this great non-profit organization, have earned a spot in the Top 3 Finalists of the Cox Conserves Heroes contest. Without Donna's knowledge, Ralph contacted Bob and encouraged him to also nominate her for this prestigious award. He did and now SGH is getting much deserved recognition.

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 between BMTA and SGH. Since that time, Benton MacKaye Trail Association and Save Georgia's Hemlocks have partnered to treat hundreds of hemlocks along parts of the BMT and most recently in the National Forest.

This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Cox Conserves Heroes program. Created in partnership with The Trust for Public Land, it recognizes local environmental volunteers and makes donations to local non-profits. The public nominates volunteers using a brief form and then a panel of local environmental leaders selects three finalists who are profiled in a video. The public watches the videos and votes on-line for their favorite, with each city choosing its own winner.

"It is a great honor to be recognized for our work to save the hemlocks from the invasive insect that is attacking them," Shearer said. "The award (whether winner or finalist) will help to increase the public's awareness of this crisis that threatens the environmental and economic health of our North Georgia communities and enable SGH to expand our educational and service efforts on behalf of these magnificent trees."

Voting on-line takes place October 1 – 29. Go to either [www.wsbtv.com](http://www.wsbtv.com) or [www.coxconservesheroes.com](http://www.coxconservesheroes.com) (Atlanta 2012) for a link to the voting site. Channel 2 WSB-TV is proud to partner with The Trust for Public Land and a total of \$15,000 will be donated to the winner and other two finalists. Winner Announcement will be mid-November.

**Please vote for Donna and Save Georgia's Hemlocks!**



**Pictured: From ABC-TV, Videographer Ronnie Hoof and Public Affairs Director, Jocelyn Davis, Donna Shearer and Ralph Heller**

(Save Georgia's Hemlocks is a 100% volunteer, 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization of concerned citizens dedicated to preserving, conserving and restoring endangered hemlocks through educations and charitable service. To learn more, please visit: [www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org](http://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org) or call the Hemlock Help Line, [706-429-8010](tel:706-429-8010).)

## Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition Bi-Annual Conference Deemed Great Success...

By Darcy Douglas

The Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition, an organization intended to foster communication between/amongst the various foot trail organizations in the Southeast USA, recently held their bi-annual conference. The location this time was Fall Creek Falls State Park in Tennessee. The conference was attended by lots of new folks as well as by members of the Leadership Council, meaning the 2 representatives from each club. Our reps, for BMTA, are Ernie Engman and me.



There were many meetings about various trail issues, including wilderness, The Great Eastern Trail, trail building skills, and experiences of long distance hikers. One of our more unusual evening speakers was a 10 year old boy who hiked the AT when he was 8, with his Dad. His mother and sister also hiked with him for a part of the trail. He was quite an inviting young man! There was music, dancing, and an open-mike night for the entertainment, as well as Social Hour. The food was plentiful and accommodations were delightful, overall. One of my jobs is to check around with everyone to see how they are doing, and everyone seemed to fully enjoy the conference.

Oh....the hikes!!!! These were spectacular!!! The terrain in that part of Tennessee, the Cumberland Plateau, is quite different from our Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina hills. There was a lot of history to be learned, mining of several elements including coal has been an issue on the trails, and the animals, water, and weather were just perfect. There was something for everyone in this setting - old, young, able, and less able, those in a hurry, and those with all day.

**We hope you will join us for our next meeting in 2 years!!!**

# Ellijay: An Appalachian Trail Town... By Travis Crouch

The city of Ellijay in Gilmer County, Georgia has the distinct privilege of being situated at the heart of the Chattahoochee National Forest. For the outdoor enthusiast, this means that recreational opportunities abound in the surrounding areas, making Ellijay a basecamp for adventure. Whether your passion is hunting, fishing, bicycling, boating, or hiking, the possibilities are virtually endless. To the hiker, however, the area is a treasure trove of trails for every ability level.



**Travis Crouch**

In extreme eastern Gilmer County, atop Springer Mountain, lie the southern termini of the Appalachian and Benton MacKaye Trails. These two iconic footpaths combine to form a 525 mile figure-eight that traverses the best of what the Southern Appalachians have to offer. The Appalachian Trail continues for another 1948 miles across an additional 11 states to its Northern Terminus atop Mount Katahdin in Maine.

The concept of the Appalachian Trail was originally envisioned and promoted by none other than Benton MacKaye himself. He originally shared his vision for a long distance footpath along the spine of the Appalachians in an article titled *An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning* written for the October 1921 issue of *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. The idea was actively promoted by MacKaye and others for the next four years until the inaugural meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference was held on March 2, 1925 at the grand Raleigh Hotel in Washington, DC. The original meeting included roughly two dozen individuals, mainly from the northern states where the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Green Mountain Club were already active.



Travis and family are the owners and operators of the North Georgia Mountain Outfitters in Ellijay, Georgia. Travis, wife, and daughter are all seasoned outdoor adventurers and are equipped to supply you with all your outdoor needs. Whether it be equipment or advice, they are never short of both. North Georgia Mountain Outfitters are avid supporters of the BMTA as well as the community. (Gene Nix)

From these humble beginnings was birthed what is now the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, which oversees the 2,184 miles of the AT's trail corridor. The first task, of course was to construct the footpath. While MacKaye and his supporters had been quite successful in casting the vision for the trail, another type of personality was needed to move the vision forward to reality. The much needed breath of life for the project came from Judge Author Perkins and Myron Avery. These two men brought an incredible amount of talent and energy to the project, effectively kicking the effort into high gear. Over the next twelve years, a series of construction and maintaining clubs were established, and in 1937, just 12 years after the first Appalachian Trail Conference meeting, the last section of trail was completed by a CCC crew near Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine. (A bronze plaque commemorating this milestone can be seen on the AT at mile 1984.)



Over the next several years a major tropical storm, highway projects, and a World War presented major setbacks to the trail. By 1951, the year Gene Espy became the second successful thru-hiker, the Trail was complete once again. By this time, the principal emphasis of the Appalachian Trail Conference had shifted from trail construction to protecting the trail corridor. This need had been identified as early as 1937, but its need became more and more apparent as sprawling development threatened the existing footpath.



Over the next several years, a unique collaborative effort involving the Federal Government and the Appalachian Trail Conference pooled public and private funding to permanently protect the AT Trail Corridor. Along the way, key legislation was signed by presidents Johnson, Carter, and Reagan. By the year 2000, seventy five years after the first ATC meeting, the Trail Corridor was protected all but a few miles, the maintenance was officially in the hands of 31 local maintaining clubs, and the newly named Appalachian Trail Conservancy was officially in charge of administering the Trail.



Having essentially accomplished the two daunting tasks of building and protecting the Trail, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy returned to the original vision of Benton MacKaye for direction. MacKaye's original article had envisioned "a series of recreational communities throughout the Appalachian chain of mountains from New England to Georgia, these to be connected by a walking trail." The Appalachian Trail Conservancy came up with the "Appalachian Trail Town" program designation to formalize the network of recreational communities originally envisioned by MacKaye.



According to the ATC, the program is designed to accomplish several objectives. First, it is intended to "engage community citizens, Trail visitors and stewards." Second, it will "thank communities for their decades of service to hikers." Third, it should "act as a catalyst for enhancing sustainable economic development" for the regions bordering the Trail Corridor. Fourth, it hopes to "aid local municipalities and regional areas with conservation planning." Finally, it will "help local community members see the Trail as a resource and asset." In short, the intent of the program is for the ATC and towns along the way to enter into a relationship in which each promotes and protects the other.

On September 14<sup>th</sup> Ellijay and Gilmer County became the fourth community in Georgia to receive this coveted designation as an AT Trail Town. In a ceremony held at the new Chamber office, participants from the local community joined representatives from the Forest Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, as well as Gene Espy, the second successful thru-hiker of the Appalachian Trail in officially making the designation. Over 100 attendees gathered to help celebrate the event.



The new designation goes hand in hand with Ellijay's recent emphasis on "eco-tourism" in the form of outdoor recreation and agri-tourism. We are thrilled to join the chain of other AT communities along the Trail from here to Maine.

## Leaving A Footpath For Generations To Follow

In the middle of June, I went to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico with Order of the Arrow Trail Crew. Philmont is 255,000 acre ranch owned by the Boy Scouts of America. It provides boy scouts with multiple high adventure opportunities such as, hiking, rifle shooting, spar-pole climbing, and rock climbing. OATC is a high adventure opportunity for Boy Scouts who are in the honor society. It is a two week long program that consists of one week of



working on trails and one week of hiking in the backcountry. Because I had worked with my father on his section of the Benton MacKaye, and the working parties, I was excited to be able to work for Philmont. For the first week, the twenty of us operated out of the camp that we set up a mile and a half from the work site. Every day following we worked on repairing the trail, doing work such as, clearing overhang, defining the back slope, and building rock walls and switchbacks.. The four leaders had taken our watches and phones at the beginning, so we had no way of telling time or making outside contact. It was just us and the great landscape of Philmont. Overall we fixed 2.5



miles of trail. For the second week we hiked the trek that we got to design ourselves. We cleared elevations of 12,000 feet, did service projects for the staff camps, and participated in special programs like night mining. Overall it was a life changing trip where we got to contribute back to the great area that provided so much for us.

My name is Alex Dumas, son of Larry Dumas. Fannin High School Junior, ordeal member of Order of the Arrow Trail Crew, National Honor Society, and trombone player in FHS Band.

## Announcing - NEW BMT Map

**By: Marge Heller**

The BMTA Board is proud to announce a new, outdoor-adventure 17" x 34" Wall Map of the Benton MacKaye Trail. Available at the BMTA Store on [www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org) - it can be purchased, **Flat or Rolled: \$15 each** or **Laminated & Rolled: \$30 (plus shipping)**. A limited number of beautiful, pine framed Maps are also for sale at \$125 each. And, one unique, rustic framed Map is for sale at \$250. For the framed Maps, e-mail us at [info@bmta.org](mailto:info@bmta.org).



## Seen Along the Trail...Mike Christison

I have found that working on the trail allows me to slow down my hiking and see things I might otherwise miss. On this August day, my friend Sue McConnell and I were working on section 10b between Hemp Top Trail and Jacks River Trail, when we came across these small but spectacular examples of Pinesap, *Monatropa hypopithys*. This is a very unusual flowering plant. It has no chlorophyll or typical green leaves, since it does not make its own food. Previously believed to be a saprophyte, living on dead material, it is now considered myco-heterotrophic, living in association with soil fungi. It has a wide range in North America, but it is an uncommon plant which is rarely encountered. It is even rarer to see it with such bright colors, since the flowers quickly fade to brown or black. An exciting find!



**Picture Taken By Sue McConnell**

# TN/NC BMTA Worktrip - September 2, 2012

By Rick Harris

## **September 2, 2012 - TN/NC BMTA Maintenance Trip - BMT Section 14a - Coker Creek to TN68**

Five maintainers, including the two section maintainers John & Zoe Zartas, logged and brushed out this section from TN68 down to Coker Creek, getting out just as the rain was coming in from Hurricane Isaac. We got a late start due to a couple getting lost on the back roads, but we got all the work done. This was John and Zoe's first work trip with chainsaw since attaining their certification. Rick Harris stuck with them and helped John plan out his cuts, etc. We cut out about 12 trees, a few quite large and complex, going through 3 tanks of gas on the chainsaw. We left two behind, about midway on the trail. One was too large for our chainsaw, about 28 inches in diameter, and one was suspended above the trail in a precarious position about 18 inches in diameter. John and Zoe will contact Steve Biatowas, Ocoee Trails Tech, to go out with them



to get these two trees with his bigger saws and greater experience. Dan and Debbie Nennstiel, new maintainers from Tallahassee, FL, who have a cabin closeby, joined us. They have lots of chainsaw experience down in Florida, but are not currently certified by the USFS. They plan to get their certification soon and have agreed to take on section 16a (Sandy Gap to Round Top), which is very close to their cabin. This is the lower half of the infamous Heart of Darkness. Also, Mary Beth Sutton was going to join us from Signal Mountain with her high school daughter, but did not make it due to computer difficulties. Her daughter had to finish a school paper by Monday, but late Saturday night she accidentally deleted her whole paper and had to use Sunday to retype her whole paper. That fits right up there in the category of "the dog ate it". A total of 42 volunteer hours were accumulated.

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## TN/NC BMTA Worktrip - September 7, 2012

**Friday, September 7, 2012 - BMT Section 12a - Dry Pond Lead Section** - New section maintainer Nathan McKee went out today to check out his new section and to brush it out. He brushed out about 3 or the 4 miles of the section and cut a few small trees, leaving behind 3 easy to step over trees which were too big for his hand saw. He plans to go out again and finish the job in a couple of weeks. A total of 6.5 volunteer hours were accumulated.



# 30" Blowdown on Section 8 ...Almost Too Big To Handle

Recently, Section 8 received a blow down that was almost too big to handle. However, Ken Jones, Phyllis Jones, and Sawyer instructor Jim Holland had other ideas. Jim, Phyllis, and Ken were able to open the trail. They first had to cut two trees out of the FS road to even get there. Since their saws were two inches too short, they had to take along a crosscut saw to finish the job. They cut all the way around the tree, then cut the middle out with the crosscut.

Ken, Phyllis, and Jim remarked that it was an interesting project...they enjoyed the hike and cutting the tree. All Sawyers enjoyed their day!



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

Click on the chainsaw to view more pictures and videos of these dedicated Benton MacKaye Trail Maintainers at work.



## BMTA Members Attend Chainsaw Certification Classes

The Blue Ridge Ranger District in the Chattahoochee National Forest recently conducted a chainsaw and CPR/First Aid class on Sept 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Jim Holland was the instructor for both classes. The morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> was spent covering CPR techniques and First Aid followed by the chainsaw classroom work in the afternoon. The field work was on Sunday below Neels Gap. Jim Holland was the instructor. Ken Jones was recertified. Vic Fredlund and Mark Yost went from A to B certification. Gene Nix received his Sawyer B certification.



By Gene Nix

## Spreading The Word On The BMT...

Ralph and Marge Heller met up in Murren, Switzerland with BMTA founding member, George Owen, Claire Broadwell, Margaret Meadows and Debbie Tutten. They are shown here with our beautiful new wall map of the BMT. George annually has led guided hikes in the Swiss mountains. Members Claire, Margaret, Debbie, and Dayton & Martha Miller along with Jan Stansell (not pictured) were part of Owen's hiking group.



Laura & Gene Nix traveled by catamaran to the Florida Keys. Shown here North of Key Largo...



Darcy Douglas in the Czech Republic with her daughter and grand daughter



**Editor's Note:** If you have a photo of yourself while travelling and wearing a BMT shirt or hat, send it to us for use in a future Newsletter. Or, if no picture, then a few sentences about how you spread the word on the Benton MacKaye Trail while on a trip.

# Oral Rabies Vaccination Area...

## NOTICE

### ORAL RABIES VACCINATION AREA

The Wildlife Services (WS) program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is working with the Tennessee Department of Health to protect people and pets from the threat of rabies in your area. WS is distributing an oral rabies vaccination (ORV) bait to vaccinate raccoons, foxes, and coyotes and help stop further spread of rabies. ORV baits are about the size of a matchbox and are coated with fishmeal flavoring. ORV baits will be distributed by plane and by vehicle.



**ORV Baits will be distributed between: **October 2 – 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012****

#### **What if I find rabies baits?**

If you find ORV baits, leave them alone, unless they are where children or pets play. To move ORV baits safely, you should:

- Wear gloves or use a paper towel or plastic bag when picking up the baits.
- Toss intact baits into a wooded area or other raccoon habitat.
- Bag and dispose of any damaged baits in the trash.
- Take precautions by practicing proper hygiene – wash with soap and water any skin or wounds that may have come into contact with ORV baits, especially if the bait was damaged.

#### **What if my pet eats the bait?**

- **Don't panic!** A few baits are not harmful, though eating a large number may cause an upset stomach.
- Do not risk getting bitten or being exposed to the vaccine by taking a bait away from your pet.
- Check the area for more baits and relocate any remaining baits to a wooded area.

#### **Questions about ORV or bait you have found?**

- Call Wildlife Services at 866-487-3297 or the Tennessee Department of Health at 615-741-7247