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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



VOLUME 31, ISSUE 8

AUGUST 30, 2014

SEFTC September 18-21 Event Features Seminars, Hikes, Dinners

TIMELY REMINDER - REGISTER NOW

It's now less than a month until the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC) meets **September 18-21** in Blairsville, GA at the new Union County Community Center and Vogel State Park.



This eighth biennial conference features a plenary session **Friday** morning the 19th, with workshops in the afternoon. Other workshops are on **Sunday** morning the 21st. Hikes aplenty are available on **Thursday** afternoon, **Saturday**, and **Sunday** afternoon (Sept. 18, 20, and 21).

Full details of this event with schedule, seminars, hikes, and two evening dinners are available on the website www.southeasternfoottrails.org - complete with the registration form. So sign up now.

Our **Friday** evening barbeque program features Jessica Mou, naturalist at Vogel State Park, and Nelson Thomas, popular mountain-grown musician - all at the lakeside indoor shelter at Vogel State Park. **Saturday** evening's dinner will feature Ron Tipton as speaker, executive director of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and a long-time member of BMTA.

Several members of BMTA are leading seminars and hikes. Also, our BMTA Vice President Darcy Douglas is the organization's slate candidate for the SEFTC presidency, to be voted upon at the general meeting later Sunday morning, **September 21**.

So come on out and join us for the weekend. **HURRY NOW TO REGISTER!**

Join us for the

2014 Biennial Conference

of the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition

BLAIRSVILLE, GA – Sept. 18 – 21, 2014



Join us for hikes, workshops on all sorts of hiking related topics with nationally known speakers, lots of fun and great food! Our headquarters for the Conference will be the Union County Community Center in Blairsville and the new Comfort Inn right next door. Visit our website for details and registration information:

www.southeasternfoottrails.org.

Our speakers include:



RON TIPTON

Executive
Director,
Appalachian
Trail
Conservancy



JANET ZELLER

National
Accessibility
Program
Manager, U.S.
Forest Service

BMTA ANNUAL MEETING OCTOBER 17-19, 2014

By Darcy Douglas

The Benton MacKaye Annual Meeting will be held [October 17-19](#) at Coker Creek Retreat Center on Hwy 68 in Tennessee! We'll be hiking some of the most beautiful trails in America, eating fabulous food, and enjoying one another's company while we elect new officers and say thank you to those leaving. Maintainers get their awards, too. We'll have a report on the newest section of the BMT, the Yellow Creek Trail that has taken us off the dangerous roadwalk! Please contact Coker Creek directly at 423-261-2340 or Cokercreekvillage.com to make arrangements for your meal choices and cabins, dorms, or whatever you'd like for sleeping arrangements. We'll have a program of sorts on [Friday](#) evening, hikes [Friday](#), [Saturday](#), and [Sunday](#), and the main meeting [Saturday](#) evening. Remember to contact Leal Giddon directly to make your personal arrangements. Hope to see everyone there!!!!



50th anniversary of the Wilderness

By Darcey Douglas

The Chattahoochee National Forest and partners will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness in Dahlonega, Georgia on Saturday, [September 6](#). The event has many special things happening in downtown Dahlonega, and has been planned for many months. We hope to see you there!!!!

Festivities kick-off at 10:30 a.m. in Hancock Park with keynote speaker Dale Bosworth, who served as the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service from 2001-2007. Don't miss hearing his insights, as well as other inspirational speakers, educational exhibits, traditional skills demonstrations, vendors, live music, food and a nature play space for kids.

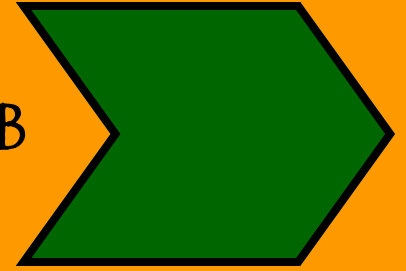
For more information about the event and some of Georgia's amazing Wilderness Areas, visit the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests website at www.fs.usda.gov/conf or Facebook at www.Facebook.com/Wilderness50.



TN/NC Work Trip - July 26, 2014

Sycamore Creek Section of BMT #17A-B

Tellico River to Whigg Meadow Rd



By Rick Harris

Seven maintainers spent a warm sunny summer day in the cool highlands of the Tellico Ranger District maintaining this 6 mile stretch of the BMT with elevations between 2100 and 4300 feet. Rick and Brenda Harris and Steve Cartwright (former BMTA President and now Scouter in Athens, TN) started at the top. Rick logged out the entire 6 mile stretch and Brenda and Steve cleared brush on about half of this section down to about Mangum Branch. Pam and Kent Mathews (section maintainers) brushed out the two lower miles of the trail up to the first switchback with swingblades. Steve Biatowas (former Ocoee Trails Tech, now retired) and Scott Walker (local Scouter and resident of Tellico Plains) cleared the remainder with brush cutters. It was a very long day, but we were happy to get the job completely done.

The lower two mile section along the edge of Sycamore Creek will be hiked by people attending the Tellico Wild weekend coming up [August 9-10](#). Numerous other hikes and activities are planned for the weekend along with the SEFTC/BMTA Tellico Plains Trail Town dedication to be held at the Tellico Outpost Pavilion at 5:30 PM on Saturday, [August 9](#). Pam and Kent Mathews will be leading the hike on this section where her relatives once lived, followed by a tour of the fish hatchery, then of the Charles Hall Museum in Tellico Plains, highlighting the logging history of the area. Charles Hall, father of Pam Mathews, will help lead the tour of the museum. All are welcome to the Tellico Wild activities. Information is available on the Meetup page for Tennessee Wild (www.meetup.com/tennessee-wild).

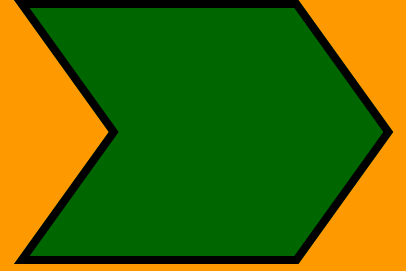
Travel and Work hours are as follows:

Rick Harris, travel 1/2 hour, work 10.5 hours, total 11 hours
Brenda Harris, travel 1/2 hour, work 10.5 hours, total 11 hours
Pam Mathews, travel 2 hours, work 7.5 hours, total 9.5 hours
Kent Mathews, travel 2 hour, work 7.5 hours, total 9.5 hours
Steve Biatowas, travel 1 hour, work 10.5 hours, 11.5 hours
Stephen Cartwright, travel 1.5 hour, work 10.5 hours, total 12 hours
Scott Walker, travel 1/2 hour, work 10.5 hours, total 11 hours

TOTAL HOURS: 75.5 hours

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip

Sat Aug 3, 2014 - Beech Gap to Mud Gap



By Rick Harris

Crews worked on the section of the BMT from Mud Gap to Beech Gap. They cleared the two sections of briars which is always a problem between Beech Gap and North River Road, and then they brushed out the trail completely between North River Road and Mud Gap. Work still needs to be done brushing out the section from Beech Gap to North River Road, and to log out the whole section.

Volunteer Hours:

Steve Cartwright, travel time 3 hrs, work time 8.5 hours, total 11.5

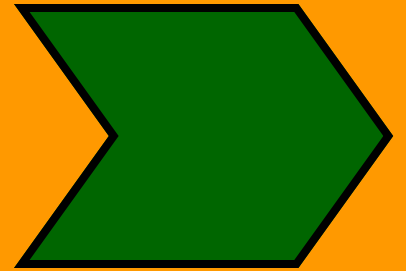
Steve Biatowas, travel time 2 hours, work time 8.5 hours, total 10.5 hours

Rick Harris, travel time 1 hour, work time 8.5 hours, total 9.5 hours

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS = 31.5 hours

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip

Wed July 23, 2014 - Sandy Gap to Round Top



The Nennstiel family and friends maintained their section of the BMT from Sandy Gap to Round Top, clearing vegetation and removing several blowdowns. They specifically cleared the heavy briar growth in sections along the ridge top. Volunteer hours are as follows:

Dan Neenstiel, travel time 2 hours, work time 6 hours, total 8 hours

Debbie Neenstiel, travel time 2 hours, work time 6 hours, total 8 hours

Carson Neenstiel, travel time 2 hours, work time 6 hours, total 8 hours

Gatlin Neenstiel, travel time 2 hours, work time 6 hours, total 8 hours

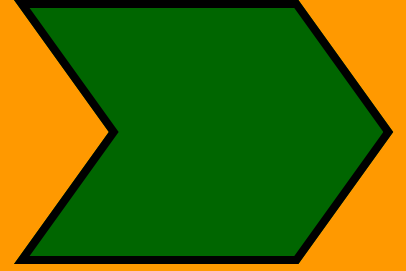
Hailey Eby, travel time 2 hours, work time 4 hours, total 6 hours

Brent Stowers, travel time 2 hours, work time 8 hours, total 10 hours

TOTAL = 48 hours

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip

Section 16b - Round Top to Sledrunner Gap - 8/13/2014



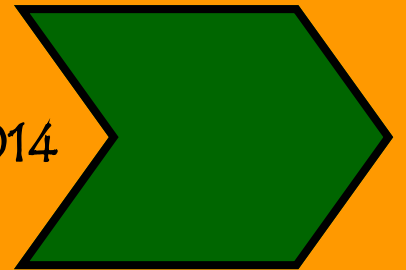
Kendall Hobson (section maintainer) and I worked on the section of the BMT from Sledrunner Gap to Round Top [yesterday, Aug 13](#), 2014. It was a long, long day. I met Kendall at his home about 8:15 AM then we drove a vehicle to Groundhog Branch on Copper Creek Road below Round Top for our shuttle at the end the trip. We then drove to Beaverdam Bald in my truck and headed down to Sledrunner Gap. With my chainsaw I cleared all the blowdowns off the trail from Sledrunner Gap to Round Top. Kendall used his brushcutter to clear about 3/4 of the 2.6 mile distance of the trail before he ran out of gas. Also, it was getting late and we were very ready to quit. We then walked back to his car on Groundhog Branch and went to his house for supper. Kendall then drove me back to my truck on top of Beaverdam Bald. I got home about 11 PM as did Kendall. Kendall plans to go back up there one day next week to finish off the brushing out.

The weather was perfect [yesterday](#). The temps probably never got above 65 degrees all day at the high elevation with a brisk breeze. You could not ask for a better day for this gruelingly long work day. I slept in until about 10 AM [today](#), skipping the usual Tellico work trip. We don't call the stretch of the BMT from Sandy Gap to Sledrunner Gap the "Heart of Darkness" for nothing. Shuttles are nearly impossible and the area on the ridgeline grows up in briars with incredible speed. My hats off to the section maintainers for this stretch of the BMT.

Kendall Hobson, travel time 3 hours, work hours 8 hours = 11 hours
Rick Harris, travel time 3 hours, work hours 8 hours = 11 hours total

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip

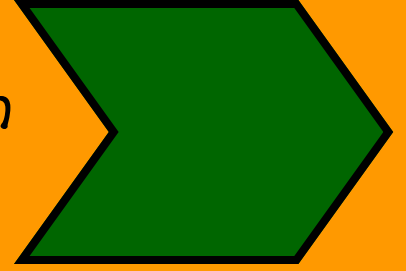
Section 14a-b, TN68 to Coker Creek, Aug 10, 2014



Zoe and John Zardis (section maintainers) brushed and logged out their section from the intersection with the motorcycle trail north of TN68 down to Coker Creek on [August 10](#), 2014. They removed 5 blowdowns and lots of vegetation. They note there are two sections which need tread repair, which they plan to do in the near future. They also plan to repaint the blazes from TN68 up to the intersection with the motorcycle trail.

Zoe Zardis, travel hours 1, work hours 8.5 = 9.5 hours
John Zardis, travel hours 1, work hours 8.5 = 9.5 hours

Tellico Wild and Tellico Plains Trail Town Dedication Great Success



Richard Harris

On August 9 and 10, Tellico Plains (“The Little Town with the Big Back Yard”) was abuzz with activity in the great outdoors. The event was organized by Tennessee Wild but cosponsored by the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS), the Benton MacKaye Trails Association (BMTA), the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC), the USFS Tellico Ranger District, and the town of Tellico Plains.



Saturday started out with a meeting behind the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center before taking off on various interpretive and historic hikes, a trail maintenance trip, and stand up paddle boarding (SUP) at Indian Boundary Lake (compliments of Rock/Creek Outfitters).

Everyone then returned to a big white tent next to the Tellico Outpost Pavilion at 5:30 PM for the Tellico Plains Trail Town Dedication Ceremony. SEFTC Vice President Darcy Douglas, BMTA President David Blount, USFS Tellico Recreation Manager Brandon Burke, and Tellico Plains Mayor Patrick Hawkins gave brief talks. Then a ribbon cutting ceremony was held, but using a more apropos grape vine with loppers.

The SEFTC/BMTA Trail Town Program is designed to promote hiking and backpacking, canoeing, kayaking, biking, and horseback riding in communities with 100+ miles of trails in their immediate vicinity. The Tellico Ranger District of the USFS has about 180 miles of trails, and the adjoining districts have

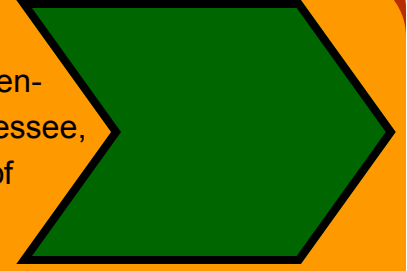
several more hundreds of miles of trails. Also the Benton MacKaye Trail, a 300 mile long-distance wilderness trail from Springer Mountain GA to the north end of the Smokies, courses close to Tellico Plains, crossing the Tellico River just above Green Cove. A website has been designed to help visitors to the area plan their hiking or backpacking trip (<http://tellico-plains.com/tellico-plains-trail-town.html>). Eventually there will be highway signs, rack cards, and trail guides developed to aid the hiker and backpacker.



Continues On Next Page



Bob Richards, Program Coordinator for the Greenways & Trails Program for the State of Tennessee, then spoke on the economic and health benefits of promoting the trails in small communities such as Tellico Plains bordering the national forest.



Bob Richards also congratulated Tellico Plains and the Tellico Ranger District of the USFS on recently being chosen to receive a \$200,000 RTP grant to build and improve existing trails in the forest. This \$200,000 will be matched with another \$50,000 of USFS funds and work in kind to expand the existing trail system as well as for other trail improvements in the district. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants are funded by the federal highway gas tax and are utilized to build or improve trails of all types throughout the State of Tennessee.

Following Bob Richard's talk, Jim Phitzer (Aldo Leopold impersonator from Chattanooga) entertained the group with a hilarious fly fishing story, then most everyone convened in the Crab Trab at the Outpost Pavilion to eat, drink and have a good time while listening to live music by Faith Willin'.

On Sunday a crowd then again met behind the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center to break into hikes, stand up paddle boarding, and snorkeling in Citico Creek. The weather was very cooperative both days. It was expected to rain both Saturday and Sunday, but not a drop fell anywhere.

The event weekend was coordinated by Laura Hodge of TN Wild, Rick Harris of the BMTA and SEFTC, and Bill Hodge of SAWS, in cooperation with the Town of Tellico Plains and the USFS.



New BMT Trail Signs Going Up in the Tellico Area of the Cherokee National Forest

By Rick Harris

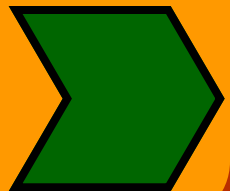
A year long project is finally coming to fruition. The Tellico Ranger District is getting new trail signs all along the length of the BMT. The signs were designed by Rick Harris and the rangers at the Tellico Ranger District and were paid for by the BMTA. Once the signs came in, posts were stained, then signs were mounted on the posts, utilizing theft-proof bolts and nuts. The first 8 of the 36 signs were installed on **July 30**. Plans are to install the remaining signs over the next few weeks. The first signs to be installed were those near the Cherohala Skyway, Whigg Meadow, and Sycamore Creek down to the Tellico River, and also near Unicoi Gap and Buck Bald.



Most of the remaining signs to be installed will be in wilderness. They will have to be hauled in on horses with the help of our equestrian friends of the Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen. The wilderness signs will be mounted onto locust logs which will add to the weight of the signs, but they should last a lot longer than the treated pine posts being used outside of wilderness.

The signs outside of wilderness are made of a very dense plastic material (HDPE) and those inside wilderness are routed oak signs of the typical wilderness design. Plans are to also put new signs along

the trail through the Nantahala National Forest over the next year or so, including new signs on the Yellow Creek Mountain Reroute section just south of the Smokies. It is hoped that new signs will eventually go up in Georgia with the same design as these up in Tennessee and North Carolina to give some uniformity to the signing of our trail. The new signs meet the USFS standards for trail signing.



Tennessee/North Carolina Work Trip for the BMT

By Dick Evans



The regularly scheduled Tennessee/North Carolina Work Trip for the BMT will be held on [September 27th](#), 2014. Meeting time is 9:00AM at the Unicoi Overlook Parking Area on the Cherohala Skyway just east of the state line/Beech Gap. Since most of this section is in designated Wilderness, only hand tools will be used to maintain this high altitude section of the Trail. We will follow the BMT over the bridge we relocated last year, and then north on the BMT/Fodderstack Trail, and return the same route. This is a fairly level stretch of trail, and we should be able to see the start of the Fall colors. Bring water, lunch and rain gear. For more information, call Trip Leader Dick Evans at 828-479-2503.

Sea Sponge or Brain Mushroom

By Barry Allen

Here is a picture of cauliflower mushroom in the Sparassis family, probably *S. Crispa*. The picture was taken on 8/22 on Benton MacKaye section 3. Also called a 'sea sponge' or brain mushroom, this fungi is typically found growing in oak and pine forests, and is identified by its many folds resembling lasagna or egg noodles. Though edible, this mushroom is said to be devilishly hard to clean, with dirt and leaf debris collecting in its folds. It is a parasite to oak and conifer roots, and will typically re-appear in the same spot year after year.



July Work Trip Report ...Georgia The Deep Gap Nine vs. Photosynthesis

By Tom Keene

It's been quite a year for green briars -- and indeed for all manner of vegetation. The powerlines cutting across the trail, and Kimsey Highway at Deep Gap provided a super environment for weed growth. There was plenty of cutting back to do even in the deeper woods.

Seven Georgia volunteers plus Matt Henery and Drew McClarey from the Ocoee/Hiawassee District took on the weeds. We fanned out in two groups from Deep Gap, and cleared virtually the entire stretch from with the Dry Pond Lead Trail to the crossing of the Kimsey Highway 2. 7 miles trail north. 45 hours of work total.

Left to right on the accompanying photo: Matt Henry, Mark Yost, Bob Sloan, Ralph Heller, Barry Allen, Drew McCarley, Bob Ruby, Wes Clonts. Seated in front, River.

Photo by Tom Keene



Easy Trek...Saturday, July 26 on Amadahy Trail by Carter's Lake

On **Saturday, July 26, 2014**, the Easy Trekkers braved the heat of another hot, summer day in Georgia. The heat was somewhat ameliorated by the beautiful trees and the breeze coming off Carter's Lake. However, the sweat did not dampen our spirits one iota! As we made our way on this gentle, 4-mile loop, we chatted and laughed along the way. Clayton Webster had some pretty tall tales to share.

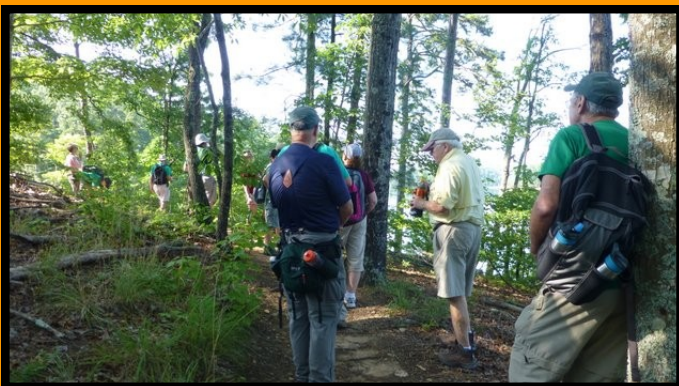
We were excited to have new hikers with us: Rob Reynolds, Mike and Debi Taylor, Kathryn Newman, and Polly Warren.

We also welcomed Fran Griner back to the fold. Again, we thank Marge Heller for capturing our day with photos and Jerry Bland for bring up the rear (aka the sweep).

We picnicked on a point overlooking the beautiful lake. We watched the watercraft pass and had fun while we ate lunch. We always say, "This was the best hike ever". Well...at least until the next one!

Happy Trails to All,

Sara Bland
Hike Leader



Easy Trek...Saturday, July 26 on Amadahy Trail : Photo's By Al Cash



Easy Trek Hikers ... Fall Branch Falls

By Ralph Heller - Hike Leader

We had 16 Easy Trek hikers on [Saturday, 8/23](#), who were eager to check out the Stanley Gap to Falls Branch Falls loop. This approximately 3-mile loop included a little of everything. We started out semi bushwhacking from the DNR food plot in the parking area for the falls. That's because, initially, the trail going upstream on Stanley Creek from the food plot, was not well defined. As we went further upstream, the trail got better. We left the stream after about ¼ mile at a nice camping spot and did a road walk up Rock Creek Road to Stanley Gap. There we hiked out about .6 miles on the Stanley Gap Trail to the intersection with the BMT. The rest of the hike was all downhill on the BMT, and we stopped to admire the beauty of Falls Branch Falls at the viewing platform. I think everyone enjoyed the hike. We finished about 11 a.m. - before the day became too hot. Afterwards, some of the participants came over to our home where Marge had watermelon, drinks and other refreshments waiting for us. I would like to welcome hikers Fran Griner, Mike and Debbie Taylor, Jeff DePaola, and Robert Reynolds who signed on as new BMTA members that day.



Yellow Creek Re-Route Nears Completion

By Dick Evans

They say that "a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step". If true, then the corollary must be "a re-route of 21 miles ends with a set of steps." It is certainly true for the Yellow Creek Re-Route Project. When we were first planning on how to accomplish the task of moving a trail over a twentyone mile section of old, unmaintained trail, we decided to concentrate on the sections where there was no convenient alternate, temporary route for hikers, as the goal was to have a hikeable trail open by June, and we thought we could address the other areas over a period of time. However, the overwhelming support by folks volunteering their time allowed us to have all but a short 0.5 mile section of trail in June. That portion could be easily bypassed by hiking up a gated Forest Service road and then a short hike to regain the original trail. The remaining half-mile would need some sort of access from the Trailhead on Old Field Gap Road up to the ridge where the original trail was located. This area had been pretty well obliterated during construction of the road, resulting in a very steep slope. We had thought that we could build a boardwalk to cross a small drainage ditch, then a set of stairs using 6x6 timbers to reach the top. Well, it was a good plan.

In early August, a crew from the Forest Service's Cheoah District, led by Jeremy Waite, met up with several local folks to build the steps to complete the entire trail. The boardwalk construction was pretty straightforward and easy, but then the Trail Gods decided to have a little fun with us. While digging to set the first steps, we ran into a granite ledge that seems to encompass the entire work area. An additional complication is that the angle of the steps was shallower than the angle of the hill, so each step needed to be dug deeper into the hillside. After several back-breaking hours of work, we finally decided that continuing the original plan would necessitate another 2-3 days of very hard work to get any type of reasonable trail. After consultation, we decided to instead go with a long switchback around the hill and then back to the original trail, using the hillside disturbed by the Department of Transportation work area so that we could avoid environmental considerations.

In early September, we should be able to get the rest of the hillside cleared and brush cut, and then have the USFS folks approve the new route, adding about 100 feet to the trail, but staying in the disturbed area. This will not affect any hikers, as the signage showing the alternate route is still in place. Many thanks to all the folks helping with this endeavor. The entire re-route is a tremendous resource for hikers, birders, etc., and opens a great area for enjoyment. Stay tuned for a "final" completion notice.

To All: A Call For Volunteers

As some of you know, the Conasauga Ranger District experienced a significant series of storms [last Wednesday](#). Please take a moment and read Karen Larsen's attached note on the storms' path and some of the key issues they are trying to address.

In addition to being an outstanding steward of our National Forest Lands, the BMTA has always represented an organization which is willing to reach out and help its neighbors. I am asking for your help over the next few weeks as follows:

1) I need volunteers to help walk Conasauga Ranger District trails and identify storm damage. Karen will need as much good information as she can get to begin scheduling work parties. These people should be willing to hike trails, taking good notes on tree and storm damage, including distance from access (GPS coord if possible) and whether chain saw, cross cut or hand saws are needed. **VOLUNTEERS FOR THIS EVALUATION SHOULD CONTACT KAREN AT THE NUMBER OR E-MAIL SHE HAS PROVIDED, cc'ing me.** Do not attempt to do the work yourself; Karen will schedule work crews based on the information collected!

2) While Karen believes most of the damage was to the west of the BMT, I need volunteers to hike sections or parts of BMT sections 8, 9, 10 and 11 -- just to make sure we are OK. Please identify tree and storm damage with details on size of downed trees, distance from access point, and whether hand saws or chain saws/cross cut saws will be needed. **Please call or e-mail me if you are able to evaluate one of these sections of the BMT.**

3) Assuming the BMT was spared from major damage, I have offered Karen our work party services in September. This means instead of working the BMT on our normal 2nd Saturday, we will go where needed to clear storm damage. I will need sawyers, and people willing to wield bow saws, hand saws and haul brush off the trails. The date would be Saturday, Sept. 13. Please let me know if you are able to attend on the 13th, since we will be co-ordinating with the Forest Service. My hope is that we have enough volunteers to split into two groups and help on two different trails. (I have confidence in our members!)

4) If you are chainsaw certified, and can work another date or two -- even during the week -- please let Karen know. Again, she will be receiving and compiling the information on needs and volunteers. So, as always, let's do what we can to help. **BUT BE SAFE** and always partner up when working or hiking.

Thanks for your help
Barry Allen
770-294-7384

Upcoming Hikes

By Ralph Heller – Hiking Director

Wednesday September 5 – Yonah Mountain: Approximately 5.2 mile round trip with 1,400 foot elevation gain to an amazing view at the top. This is not a strenuous hike, but anyone with downhill knee problems should not attempt it for their own sake. Travel time from Ellijay is about 1 hour, 55 miles one way. Afterwards it is planned to meet at the Nacoochee Grill for lunch. As usual bring lots of water. We will need to consolidate riders into several cars to shuttle to the trail head from Ellijay. Hike leader is Mike Pilvinsky. To register for the hike and for meeting time and location, call Mike @706-889-5254.

Thursday thru Sunday - September 18-21- SEFTC Biennial Meeting: Refer to SEFTC web site for information on this great 4-day event. On Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, there will be a smorgasbord of hikes of varying difficulty and locations in Tennessee, north Georgia and North Carolina in the vicinity of Blairsville. That is 21 hikes scheduled over the four-day period. To participate, register on the SEFTC web site (southeastfoottrails.org) to be an attendee and to choose your hikes. I will be leading the Falls Branch to Weaver Creek hike on Saturday. Price is \$30 to register by August 31 and \$40 after that date. All hikers must be registered, but registration also includes Friday and Sunday seminars of your choice. See SEFTC web site for all the details.

October 17-19 BMTA Annual Meeting at Coker Creek: Hikes are being planned for all three days. Information about these hikes and their locations in the Coker Creek area will be posted on the Activities section of the BMTA web site and in the September newsletter.



***DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:
September 24***

Local Newspaper Coverage on the BMT helps get the word out...

By Marge Heller

8 | Welcome

Area trails provide challenging adventures

The Benton MacKaye Trail and Benton MacKaye Trail Association offer many fun and challenging opportunities for area residents, part time c a b i n owners and visitors to hike the 67 miles of the BMT that passes through Fannin County.

By Dub Joiner
The News
Observer

The trail stretches a total of 300 miles from the Fannin/Gilmer county line to the north-

east part of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Trail spokesman Ralph Heller said for individuals who like to hike on their own, there are 17 access points to the BMT in Georgia.

Information on trailheads to various sections of the BMT can be found on the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce web site at www.blueridge-mountains.com.

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A Benton MacKaye hike leader leads a group on one of the regular hikes sponsored by the trail association each month.

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>Continued from page 8

Heller said once on the chamber site, click on self-guided tours/maps, then select Benton MacKaye Trail Town Access Points to get a printable pamphlet with a map showing access points on the first page and written directions, including GPS coordinates.

He said individuals can also visit the chamber for a free copy of this pamphlet.

“Some of the sections of the trail are long and should only be attempted by experienced hikers,” Heller said, “and information on each section, including length and difficulty, can be found in the Benton MacKaye Trail Guide – Georgia Section”

The guide can be purchased in local hiking stores and the chamber.

Heller said when purchasing the guide, also ask for information on a good map which covers the area.

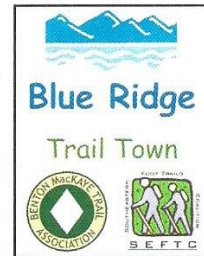
For individuals who are not comfortable hiking on their own, Heller said the BMTA offers free hikes led by association members, usually twice a month.

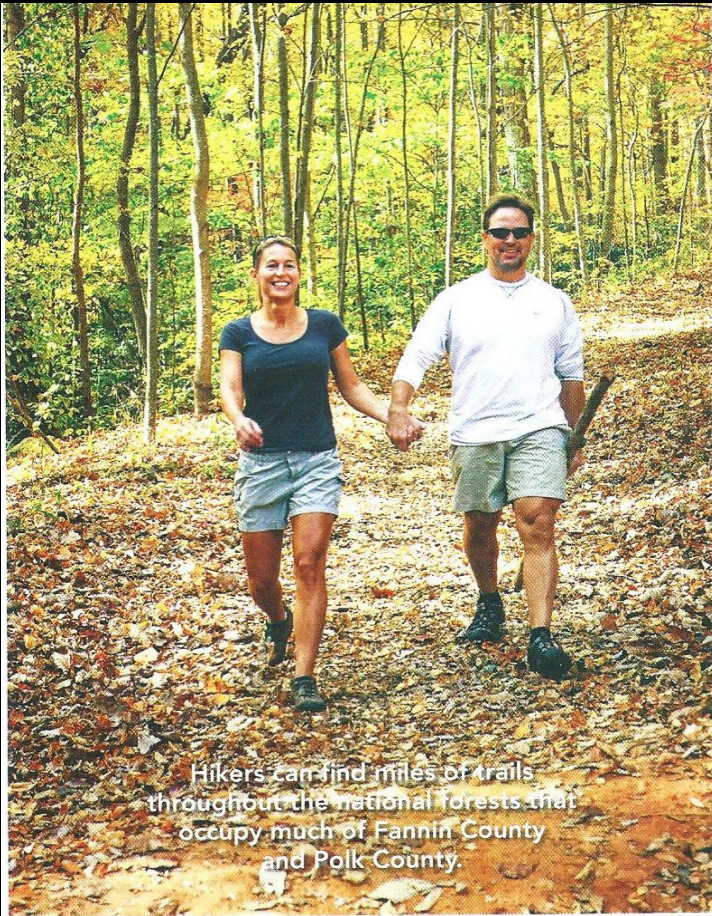
For information on the hikes, including length and difficulty, go to www.bmta.org and click on the activities calendar on the left side of the home page.

For those who enjoy the BMT and would like to “pay it forward,” he said the BMTA sponsors work trips in Georgia on the second Saturday of each month.

The trail is entirely maintained by volunteers, so help is always needed and appreciated. The activities calendar on the website gives information on future work trips.

Heller said non-members are welcome as guests both on work days and hikes. To participate, contact the hike leader or work trip leader listed with the activity listed on the website.





Hikers can find miles of trails throughout the national forests that occupy much of Fannin County and Polk County.

Benton MacKaye, Appalachian trails offer miles of adventure

Blue Ridge is now an official Benton MacKaye Trail Association “Trail Town” after having been given that designation in a special ceremony in April 2013.

The designation recognized Blue Ridge because of its proximity to a number of north Georgia trails that offer excellent opportunities for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. There is even a canoe trail on the Toccoa River and a Trout Adventure Trail utilizing part of the Benton MacKaye Trail and Appalachian Trail.

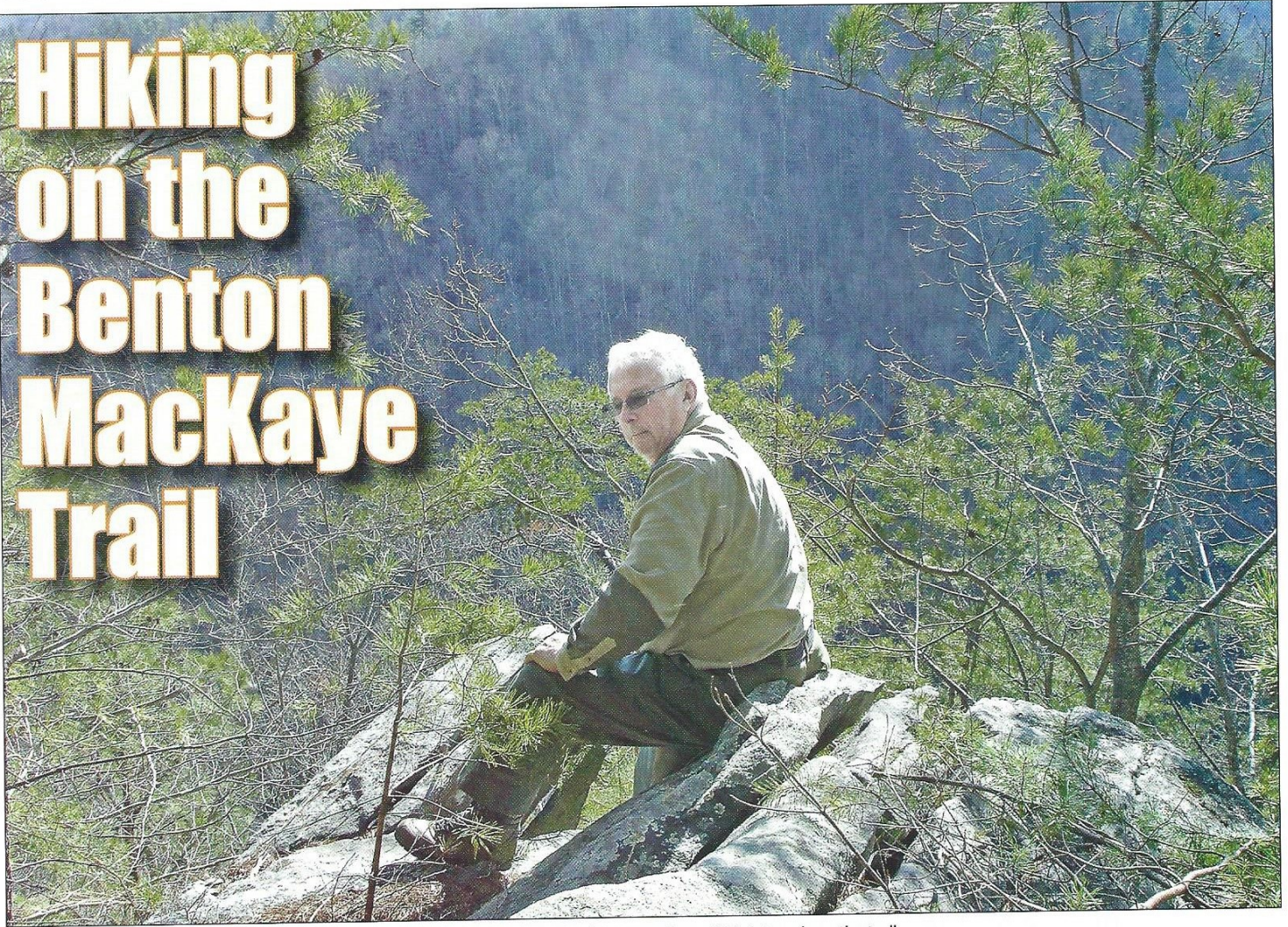
The Benton MacKaye Trail, known as the BMT, is a foot-

path that passes through Fannin County and travels nearly 300 miles through the Appalachian Mountains. It is similar to the Appalachian Trail, both of which begin on Springer Mountain on the Fannin/Gilmer county line.

The BMT’s southern terminus is located on the AT two-tenths of a mile from the start of the AT. From Springer Mountain, the BMT runs to Big Springs Campground near Davenport Gap at the northern edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,



Hiking on the Benton MacKaye Trail



Dick Evans enjoying one of the many beautiful vistas along the trail.

By KIM HAINGE
news@grahamstar.com

The Benton MacKaye Trail, which is 300 miles long from north Georgia to the Great Smoky Mountains, will be rerouted to avoid a dangerous section of road.

Hikers across the region shouldn't be too worried; the work should be done by late May or June.

Named for the Massachusetts forester and planner who pushed for the Appalachian Trail in 1921, the Benton MacKaye Trail will be rerouted through Graham County and Swain County to eliminate part of the trail on the roadbed of U.S. 129 at Deals Gap.

David Blount, president of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, said trail relocation will eliminate a very dangerous road walk from Deals Gap on the Tennessee/North Carolina border to Twentymile Ranger Station in the Great

Smoky Mountains National Park.

Project leader Dick Evans said rerouting has been discussed for nine years.

"This is the culmination of a nine year effort to find a permanent solution to the hazard presented by a road walk along U.S. 129," project leader Dick Evans said.

"This new route follows part of the original Appalachian Trail, abandoned in 1948 when the AT was routed over Fontana Dam."

The Friends of Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Club walked an 1.8-mile hike on a section of the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail, which is part of the new bypass for the Benton MacKaye Trail in Graham County.

The trail is bordered by rhododendron, mountain laurel, wild azaleas and various species of pines and hardwoods. Teaberry is a common ground cover visible in early spring.

Since the trail is in the process of

being developed as a connector between Slickrock and Fontana for the Benton MacKaye Trail, many of the hikers are bringing loppers and shears along to trim back the briars and shrubs that had grown over the past few years.

Trail officials reached an agreement with the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Nature Conservancy, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Brookfield Energy Partners and Fontana Village to eliminate the road walk.

Under this agreement, the route of the hiking trail will follow the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail from the Cheoah Dam/ Tapoco area east along the Yellow Creek Ridge and descend to Fontana Village.

Within the national park, the trail will be relocated from its starting point at Twentymile Ranger Station to start at Lakeshore Trail and follow that to intersect the trail at Lost Cove Campsite in the park.





2014 Cleanup



Saturday, September 27th

8:30 AM to 12:30 PM

At Tammen Park, Blue Ridge, GA

Join us for a morning out collecting litter from our
river, streams and lake!

Gloves and garbage bags will be provided.

Participants will receive lunch & t-shirts.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
reich.peggy@yahoo.com or 404-219-3876

