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- Vice President: Darcy Douglas
- Secretary: Joy Forehand
- GA Maintenance: Tom Keene
- Smokies Coord: Bob Ruby
- TN/NC Maintenance: Bill Hodge
- Hiking: Ralph Heller
- Membership: Dick Evans
- Treasurer: Margaret Evans
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- Newsletter Editor: Gene Nix
- Conservation: Steve Bayliss
- Past President: Dick Evans
- State Rep GA: George Owen
- State Rep TN/NC: Rick Harris



**BMTA Headquarters**



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## Former BMTA President Betty Petty Dies in December Accident

Betty Jean Petty, who served as our BMTA President in 2007-08, was killed **December 18** when her pickup truck traveling northbound on I-75 near her home of Ooltewah, TN was struck by an 18-wheeler that crossed the median into the northbound lanes as it was going south.

Prior to her two years as President, Betty was conservation director in 2006. Then she served us as Newsletter Editor, 2009-10, and as Conservation Director again in 2011-12.

Since her Presidency she has been the BMTA's main spokesperson for us in meetings on the controversial Corridor K superhighway proposal in southeast-

ern Tennessee that would have crossed our trail in that area. She also for some years has co-maintained BMT section 16e in Tennessee (Sugar Mountain Road to Tellico River Road), along with Ralph Van Pelt.

Betty was also a member of the Chattanooga Hiking Club, where she served a number of years as its Newsletter Editor and as its Delegate to the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition. Her career was at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), from which she had retired some years ago.



The funeral service was held [December 28](#) at the Bierley-Hale Funeral Home in Madisonville, TN. A number of her BMTA friends from near and far attended. Burial afterwards was at the nearby Sunset Cemetery, where Betty was laid to rest next to her husband, who preceded her in death by some years. She was 71.

Betty is remembered for many things. Basically, she was quite a fun and cheerful person, who loved a good joke and to be with other people. She also was quite the lover of animals, keeping a wide variety from chickens to goats and much else at her home. Betty also was a dog-lover, and often traveled to, and was involved in, dog shows. She loved music and was a classical pianist.

Plans are underway for a special memorial hike for her friends to remember her, to be held sometime in the Cherokee National Forest. Details should be announced soon by our association.

It was such a pre-Christmas shock to all of us to lose Betty, a friend to quite a number of BMTAers, including this writer. We will all miss her enthusiasm, concern to protect the BMT and other trails, and above all her great joy and wonderful companionship!

By George Owen

# Presidents Message ...

## *Walk With Me a Moment.....*

“The times they are a changing.” These words were released in song by Bob Dylan 50 years ago this month. Truer words could not be spoken presently about our own beloved trail. It is indeed a dynamic time to be involved in the work of the BMTA.



Change is currently underway on many fronts. The details of these changes and developments will be covered in this newsletter and upcoming editions. Without giving too much away here, I will say

that a lot of time and effort is being expended by many members to improve the route of the BMT in all three states. Much of this work is to achieve the long held goal of eliminating road walks. Other efforts are directed toward continually improving the hiking experience offered by eliminating long, steep sections and badly worn and eroded sections with well-planned and carefully laid out re-routes.

Improvements in trail signs are slated for implementation this year, to varying degrees, in all three states. This represents the culmination of several years of study and planning. It will also require substantial expenditure by the Association as budgets for the USFS continue to be lean. The Board of Directors for the BMTA has been supportive of the effort to design and gain USFS approval for new and improved signs and believes the value added to the trail experience will justify the expenditures. Let me point out also that there have been substantial anonymous donations received in the past few years that will be applied to this effort. Thank you to all who have given generously!

Requests to the USFS for Special Use Permits (SUP's) to use portions of the BMT for competitive events have been increasing over the past few years. Already, six applications have been received by the Blue Ridge District of the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest for events on or near the BMT for the first half of 2014. The board and interested members are made aware of the SUP's by Requests For Comments sent out by the various Ranger District Offices within the National Forests. The Board has long taken a position that competitive events are in conflict with the purpose for which the BMT was envisioned, built, and maintained – a primitive foot path providing quiet enjoyment. While recognizing and respecting the needs of other user groups, the board has urged the USFS and the event organizers to

use alternate routes for these events. We appreciate the spirit of compromise that has minimized the usage of the BMT for these events, both last year, and in the proposed routes for this year's events. The Board of Directors will be submitting a formal response to the Request for Comments on the mentioned SUP's slated for the Blue Ridge District. Individuals are also permitted to weigh in on this issue, pro or con. The deadline for comments from the public on the competitive events proposed to take place on or near the BMT in the Blue Ridge District for the first half of 2014 is February 7. You can request an e-mail copy of the scoping notice from the Blue Ridge District Office by calling 706-745-6928 and referring to File Code 1900/2720. Several members of the board met with the staff of the Blue Ridge District earlier this month to discuss the proliferation of competitive events on and near the BMT. A summary report of that meeting was prepared by Darcy Douglas and can be found in this newsletter. The practice of managing maintenance trips and related tasks by a committee working closely with the State Maintenance Director (Tom Keene) is working so well in Georgia that we have implemented a similar setup in Tennessee/North Carolina under State Maintenance Director Bill Hodge. What is a daunting task for one becomes much more manageable when the load is spread to three or more. Please be patient with all involved in this change as we work out the "bumps" and strive to make the planning, execution, and reporting of the monthly work trips more consistent and effective across the entire trail.

One more change on the Maintenance front involves extending the distance covered by the Georgia crews to Highway 64 at Thunder Rock Campground. As the Georgia work trips have been increasingly well attended in recent years, and as the concentration of members living in North Georgia has increased, this seems like a logical move to make a more equitable distribution of the maintenance work load between the two respective Directors.

This is a good time to do a little begging before I close. We almost always have a need for more section maintainers. However, the need is acute right now in the vicinity north and south of Big Frog Mountain. If you enjoy a good challenge and a long hike, please contact Tom Keene [tkbmta @ gmail.com](mailto:tkbmta@gmail.com) to discuss this prime opportunity. Don't be the last one on your street to claim a section!

Whether you are a Dylan fan or not, I hope you will look for ways to get involved in all the "changes" that abound at present. It will take the efforts of many to install new signs and complete pending reroutes. As always, thanks for your continued support of the BMT.

See you on the trail!

David

## BMTA MEMBERS MEET WITH USFS REGARDING BMT USE FOR COMPETITIVE EVENTS

On Friday, January 10, 2014, several members of the BMTA Board of Directors met with Andy Baker, District Ranger of the Blue Ridge District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, along with 3 employees in that district – Jake Cowart, Valencia Morris, and Taylor Hamilton.



The purpose of the meeting, initiated by the USFS staff, was to discuss requested use of various segments of the Benton MacKaye Trail by commercial groups for long-distance endurance foot races and adventure races. We looked at four different requests for Special Use Permits on portions of the Benton MacKaye Trail in the Blue Ridge Ranger District. In the past, the BMTA has responded to scoping notices of similar events with the request this primitive, backcountry trail not be used for commercial events and for events of this magnitude.

The meeting held the tone of the positive working relationship the BMTA has had with the Forest Service since the early 1980's. Several of our Board members have worked with USFS employees since those early days, and it was agreed this meeting continued to meet past standards. We thanked Andy and his staff for their consideration and respect shown to our volunteers.

As the scoping notices were sent out prior to our meeting – on January 7, 2014 – we used the data presented therein for our discussion. There will be a formal, written BMTA response forthcoming, of course. It was made clear that the BMT use is being requested in at least one case as a connecting piece of land. For other races the sections requested are quite long. The Forest Service has worked with the race coordinators to move certain race portions to roads or other trails.



One result of our meeting is that flagging to be put up just prior to the races and removed the day of will be either spotted or striped, which is different than flagging we use. Our members have removed flagging we did not authorize in the past, not knowing who put it up or why, so you should now know not to remove such flagging as it would be authorized by the Forest Service.

## BMTA MEMBERS MEET WITH USFS REGARDING BMT USE FOR COMPETITIVE EVENTS

Another result of discussions within the last year, and at this meeting, is that the BMTA Board will be moving toward a comprehensive agreement with all our land managers. We have had MOU's with individual forests, and with the National Park Service, of course. It is time, we feel, to have one comprehensive agreement with our Federal Partners since our trail is completed. Talks on this process have begun. Although the BMTA Board will make a response to the scoping notices as we always do when there is an impact on our trail, individual members are also more than welcome to make personal responses to each scoping notice. There is generally a 30 day window within which the responses need to be received. In this internet era, electronic responses are acceptable.

Feel free to contact those present at the meeting if you need further information.

Written by Darcy Douglas, Vice-President

**Also participating:**

David Blount, President

George Owen, Georgia State Representative

Steve Bayliss, Conservation Chair

Ralph Heller, Hiking Coordinator

## UPCOMING HIKES ... by Ralph Heller - Hiking Director

### February: Brush Creek Trail

The February hike will take place on [Saturday](#) Feb. 15. Due to the winter weather factor, I have selected another hike with easy road access. This time it will be in the area of the Ocoee Whitewater Center, the Brush Creek Trail. This loop hike is 6.9 miles in length and is rated as moderate. Everyone interested in eating and socializing after the hike is invited to go to the Copper Kettle in Ducktown, TN afterwards.

For meeting place and time, contact Hike leader Hank Baudet at Phone: 706-455-5583 or Email: [geezer95@gmail.com](mailto:geezer95@gmail.com).

March: – Hike Inn Wed. [March 12](#)

For information on signing up for the Hike Inn see article in this newsletter.

## Hike Inn AT Amicalola Reserved ... 7 Rooms Still Available

At last check there were still 7 rooms available. The overnight hike on [March 12](#) is starting to fill up.

As mentioned before, this is always a popular destination, so get your reservations in before all the rooms are gone.

**The procedure is to call the Inn's reservations at 800-581-8032 to book your room. Tell them you are a BMTA member. Then contact me to let me know you are signed up, so I can keep track of how many rooms are reserved. If you are coming by yourself and need a room mate contact me so I can put you in touch with someone else in the same situation.**



Remember there is a 50% discount which comes to about \$86.00 per room for two with dinner and breakfast included, a great deal.

Ralph Heller

Ph: 770-235-9760 Email: [rshbmta@gmail.com](mailto:rshbmta@gmail.com)

## TN/NC Worktrip... January 25 ...

### TN/NC Benton MacKaye Trail Worktrip

**Saturday, Jan 25, 9 AM**

**BMT from US64 to Kimsey Hwy**

Worktrip leader, Bill Hodge. We will be logging out the trail from Kimsey Mtn Highway to Highway 64 (Little Frog Wilderness). We will be meeting at Thunder Rock Campground at 9am **Saturday**. We could use chainsaw (and brush cutter) help from Kimsey Highway to Dry Pond Lead. We will use cross-cuts from Dry Pond on down. I will be posting as a SAWS trip as well. Just scouted the trip **today**.

Contact Bill Hodge for current plans

at [billhodge@trailcrews.org](mailto:billhodge@trailcrews.org) . Go to <http://www.meetup.com/>

[Cherokee-Hiking-Club-of-Southeast-Tennessee/events/161531332/](http://www.meetup.com/Cherokee-Hiking-Club-of-Southeast-Tennessee/events/161531332/) to sign up.







# February 8: Georgia Work Trip ...

**Georgia Trail Maintenance Work Day:** We will work west (trail-north) from Hudson Gap toward McKenny Gap, on beautiful, isolated Section Eight. We will refresh water diversions and side hilling, as well as clearing any remaining summer growth. Plenty of activity to keep warm! The winter views toward Rich Mountain Wilderness are top-drawer. Don't miss it!

We meet for breakfast at the L&A Corner (store&restaurant) across from the Pink Pig in Cherrylog at 8AM. Or meet at the Bushy Head Gap trailhead at 9:00 AM.

First-timers are most welcome! For what to expect, what to wear, what to bring, go to <http://www.bmta.org/pdfs/WorktripsWhatToExpect-revSep2011.pdf>

Trip leader is Barry Allen (770-294-7384)



**WEATHER POSTPONEMENT:** If weather forces a change of plans, the trip will NOT be cancelled in most cases. Instead we will simply postpone the trip for one week. Because of the changeable nature of North Georgia weather we wait as long as possible before postponing. Usually the decision is made early Friday evening and circulated immediately by email.

## Smokies Rescue ...

### A Lesson In Cold Weather Hiking and Rescue

By Ralph Heller

I received an email which gives a link to a Smoky Mountains News article giving a harrowing description of the rescue of unprepared hikers on the Appalachian Trail in the Smokies. The article describes the difficulties rescuing folks when the weather is bad and the possible consequences of not being able to complete the rescue in time. Fast response is imperative to prevent serious consequences to victims due to extreme weather conditions that can exist, even this far south. I was very impressed with efforts required to conduct such a rescue and the folks who carried it out. In addition, the article gives pointers to hikers on how to avoid hypothermia and dehydration which can occur in cold weather conditions.

The link to this very interesting article is <http://www.smokymountainnews.com/news/item/12325-a-winter-rescue-rangers-trek-into-frigid-snowy-darkness-to-save-hikers>.

## BMTA Hike January 18

### By Hike Leader - Ralph Heller

The first hike of 2014 had a turnout of just 5 hardy hikers. The hike started later, 12:30 noon, due to temperatures in the teens early in the day. We drove up Rock Creek Road and turned right onto FS Road 338, which is just before Stanley Gap. We were in luck as the first gate was open, and we were able to drive about a mile to the second gate, which was closed. From there we walked out toward Rich Mountain. Even though we followed a road bed,



**Left to Right are: Frank Forehand, Joy forehand, Nancy Sauls, and Walter Polk  
Photo Taken by Ralph Heller, Hike Leader**

the hike was enjoyable as we gained altitude, with both short range views of surrounding high steep mountains, three of which reach over 4,000 feet, and long range views of distant mountains. As you walk out this primitive road, the Rich Mountain Wilderness is immediately on your left while non-wilderness Rich Mountain Wildlife Area is on your right. This hike gives you the impression that you are in a remote and wild area even though you are really not very far from civilization and national forest boundaries. The temperature never went above the mid-thirties, but the sky was a beautiful clear blue with a bright sun. We stayed warm from the steady uphill exertion.

There were several challenges along the way. The swollen headwaters of Stanley Creek crossed the bridgeless road. We could find no place to easily cross the creek, except at the road. Those of us without high top boots got wet feet. By the way, on the right side of the road there by the creek is a great camping area for both group camping and individual tents. Farther up the road, furrows created by tire tracks had filled up with glass slick ice, and there were other icy spots that made the going slow and hazardous. A lot of water was flowing down the mountain in this area giving beautiful icicle displays. There was no snow on the ground, however.

Since we got a late start, we did not get as far as Rich Mountain, but everyone agreed that this was a great hike, and that we should revisit at some later date to hike all the way to the top.

## Canoeing The Okefenokee Swamp ...

On **January 11**, 2014 four BMTA members and two friends from the Cumberland Trail Association headed south for 3 days and two nights canoeing in the Okefenokee Swamp. They covered almost 30 miles in three days, camping in the swamp for two nights. Hank Baudette planned the adventure and was accompanied by BMTA members Mike Pilvinsky, and Mark and Cathy Yost. Ann and Tony Hook from the Cumberland Trail Association joined them. There were plenty of alligators and birds seen throughout the trip but no mosquitoes and no snakes were seen. Perfect weather added to make the trip a very memorable vacation. After leaving the swamp, Hank, Mike, Ann, and Tony continued their adventure to St. Marys, GA and camped on Cumberland Island to complete the week.



## Monday or Tuesday Hiking Trail Work Crew Tellico Ranger District, Cherokee National Forest

Dear Trail Maintainers,

Within the Tellico

Ranger District we are going to be starting a new maintenance crew which will go out on Mondays or Tuesdays (day of week to be decided) to predominantly work on the hiking trails in the district. I want to invite you to join our work crew on a regular basis.

The reasons we are starting a second work day when we already have a Thursday work crew are as follows:

- 1)The Thursday work crew is predominantly run by the Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen (SABCH) and was originally designed to maintain the horse trails in the district. However the SABCH work day has very often worked on hiking trails and there was no need for a second work day to focus on hiking trails. All the trails were being kept in reasonably good shape. However, there are about 15 new miles of horse trails which have just recently successively gone through the NEPA process and are ready to be built in the Citico Creek corridor. Thus the Thursday work crew for the next year or two (or three or four) will be focusing on building these new horse trails as well as maintaining the existing horse trails. Thus it is likely that without a second work day focusing on hiking trails, the hiking trails in the district will suffer from lack of maintenance.
- 2)In addition to routine maintenance, there are trails in the district which need reroutes to lessen the grade and make them more sustainable. We plan to identify these needs and start the NEPA process for these reroutes. Once approved, we will have new hiking trail construction to carry out.
- 3)Tellico Plains is about to receive recognition as a Trail Town by the Benton MacKaye Trail Association and the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition. This project will involve the placing of signs along the roads coming into Tellico Plains indicating this recognition, an annual work day for the local residents focused on the local trails probably on Trails Day (first Saturday of June), an internet guide to the businesses which welcome hikers (cabins, restaurants, grocery stores, post office for thru-hiker package pickup, laundromat, library with public internet available, etc.), a brochure on Tellico Plains as a Trail Town for visitor centers, and a trail guide for purchase at local stores which highlight local hiking and backpacking trails. It thus will be imperative that we keep the local trails in great shape. We don't want to attract people here for hiking and have them go home disappointed.

So, we plan to start up the new trail crew which I will coordinate with the help of Travis Schwarzer and Brandon Burke with the Tellico Ranger District USFS probably this late winter or early spring. The weekly trip could be either Mondays or Tuesdays. The Benton MacKaye Trail will not be a regular part of this crew's responsibility. The BMT will continue to be maintained by the BMT crews generally on the fourth Thursday of each month.

Additionally, we may help out the Ocoee/Hiwassee District on their trails off and on as needed and requested by their district personnel. And there will be dates we may encourage our crew to join in on the Thursday work trips when they are working on sections of the horse trails which are heavily hiked as well. Likewise, we hope that on occasion the horse trail folks will join us on occasion on our hiking trail worktrips. We all feel it is important that the hikers and horsemen continue to work together on trail projects. Our district has been a shining example of how horsemen and hikers can cooperate on trail maintenance. We wish to continue this tradition.

Plans are also in the works to have also a monthly work trip on a Saturday to focus on any trail project in either district, be it a horse or hiking trail, which needs the work of a large number of people. Since the BMT work trip is the fourth Saturday of the month, this work trip would likely be on either the first, second or third Saturday of the month.

Brandon and Travis plan also to develop a new Tellico Ranger District Volunteer Trail Maintainer website to keep us all informed of what has been accomplished, who has excelled and been awarded T-shirts, etc, and to announce upcoming maintainer trips and other special events. In addition, we will continue to notify maintainers of upcoming trips through email, Facebook and Meetup. We will try to plan trips a few weeks in advance so you can plan your calendar accordingly.

Please reply to this email to let me know whether you are interested in joining this new Monday or Tuesday Hiking Trail Crew and which day would work better for you. We are not expecting every crew member to be present every week, but we would like to see each of you who commit to this to come on a fairly regular basis. As always, there is no pay for this work, except for the pleasure of doing a good thing for the community and the T-shirts and hats which we will distribute to those who become "regulars". I have a big box full of various extra maintainer shirts and hats my wife would like to see disappear. Also, we can design our own, after that supply is exhausted. Also we will have an annual big bash party celebrating our successes.

All maintainers on this new crew would need to sign a volunteer agreement form for the Tellico District (as well as the Ocoee/Hiwassee District for work trips down there). These must be signed at least one week prior to going on any maintainer's first work trip with this new crew to assure there is enough time for the District Ranger to sign the form as well.

Also, those of you who have chainsaw or crosscut saw certification, we will need a copy of your cards as well as your CPR and First Aid cards. You could fax or email copies to us once we have the crews set up. Just a reminder, yearly "refresher" course attendance is required now for chainsaw and cross-cut saw cardholders. The Tellico District refresher course was just held last month. This spring there will be an Ocoee/Hiwassee sponsored refresher course.

If you are a regular Thursday maintainer, we ask that you not consider joining this new crew, because we do not want to detract from the great work the Thursday crew has been doing. Only volunteer on the new crew if you can guarantee that you can continue to work on the Thursday crew as you have in the past.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me by phone or email. Once we decide on a day of the week and see who can join us, we will announce upcoming work trips by email, Facebook, and Meetup. I will be meeting with Travis and Brandon soon to decide on a priority list for our local trails but my first stab at this is below. We welcome your thoughts as well.

**Below is a list of the local hiking only trails in the Tellico Ranger District.**

Richard Harris

New Crew Chief for the Monday or Tuesday Hiking Trail Work Crew Tellico Ranger District,  
Cherokee National Forest  
533 Shaw Mountain Road

Tellico Plains, TN 37385 423-253-6358 (Home) 513-260-1184 (Cell) [HarrisRi@aol.com](mailto:HarrisRi@aol.com)

Trail #	Name	Length	Type	Last Maintained	Priority
87	Falls Branch	1.3	F	12/15/2011	1
88	Bald River	4.8	F	10/31/2013	1
164	Warriors Passage	6.1	F	8/29/2013	1
170	Conasauga Falls	0.6	F	8/15/2013	1
173	Cow Camp	0.8	F	10/31/2013	1
	Unicoi Turnpike	2.0	F	6/6/2013	1
129	Indian Boundary	3.1	F	7/11/2013	1
95/54A	Bob Bald Connector	2.1	F	8/30/2011	2
85	Kirkland Creek	6.7	F	11/8/2012	2
84	Crowder Branch	2.4	F	7/21/2011	2
92	McNabb Creek	3.9	F	1/24/2013	2
98	North Fork Citico	5.2	F	12/29/2011	2
100	Rocky Flat	4.9	F	2/9/2012	2
102	Flats Mountain	6.2	F	1/10/2013	2
105	South Fork Citico	9.5	F	10/14/2011	2
107	Henderson Mountain	2.8	F	10/31/2013	2
149	Cold Springs Gap	1.1	F	1/5/2012	2
162	Panther Branch	2.6	F	7/5/2012	2
89	Sugar Cove	2.4	F	2/28/2013	3
91	Grassy Branch	3.3	F	12/6/2013	3
93	Laurel Branch	3.0	F	7/1/2010	3
94	Big Indian Branch	1.5	F	12/13/2012	3
101	Hemlock	3.3	F	2/21/2013	3
103	Long Branch	2.6	F	9/1/2011	3
196	Jeffrey Hell	2.0	F	8/18/2011	2
86	Whigg Ridge	2.8	F	Years ago	4
97	Brush Mountain	4.1	F	10/29/2009	4
136	Gravelstand Top	2.5	F	Years ago	4
139	Big Stack Gap Branch	1.7	F	Years ago	4