



Points of Interest

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Bill Hodge Honored At White House Ceremony

At a White House ceremony on March 17, President Obama honored Bill Hodge of The Wilderness Society with the Champion of Change Award for Engaging the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders. Hodge is the director of the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) program at The Wilderness Society and also an active trail maintainer and board member of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association.



As SAWS director, Hodge works to recruit and inspire the next generation of wilderness stewards to insure that public lands are cared for well into the future. The SAWS program now serves as a campaign for stewardship across 45 wilderness units from the Shenandoah Valley to the north Georgia Mountains. In 2013 alone, the program employed 23 seasonal conservation leaders, trained more than 90 wilderness stewards and facilitated over 8,000 volunteer hours of service across five National Forests.

“The challenges in stewarding our most pristine and protected of public lands also gives rise to the greatest of opportunities,” said Hodge. “The rewards are two-fold: we are keeping the trails open and protecting wilderness character while also changing the lives of young Americans by connecting them to their public lands.”

All of us at the Benton MacKaye Trail Association congratulate Bill for a job well done.



BMTA Headquarters

Presidents Message – *Walk With Me a Moment.....*

I've got some oceanfront property, in Arizona....." Does this sound too good to be true? Yeah, I'm a little skeptical myself. Would you believe some prime real estate in North Georgia and Tennessee, some with water, some with views, no money down? I made a pitch a couple months back to entice someone to volunteer to be the caretaker of the BMT on top of Big Frog Mountain and a short time later Steve Davis answered the call in a large way. Unable to choose between the North and South slopes of Big Frog, he has volunteered to maintain both Section 11a and 11b. Join me in offering thanks to Steve for making this commitment.



You're probably thinking you should have spoken up sooner and you might have secured a prime section of trail to tend and to nurture, to have and to hold, through good times and bad, for better or worse, till ill health or advanced age do you part. Well let me put a little hope in your heart and a little pep in your step as I announce we have several other open sections of trail in need of a caretaker. What's that, you say have a problem with long term commitments? Not to worry, mate! We are not looking to match you up with a "forever" section; we ask that you do it as long as it is personally rewarding and fulfills the need that many of us have to "give something back" to nature and the hiking community at large.

The following sections are in need of a person or persons to do routine maintenance 3 or 4 times per year:

- Section 7d Georgia – 2.10 miles; this section is a road walk along Boardtown Rd and Bushy Head Rd and the primary task would be to ensure that the blazing (white diamonds) is sufficient for hikers to navigate to where the trail enters the forest again.
- Section 11c Tennessee – 1.80 miles; within the Big Frog Wilderness (no power tools allowed.) This section requires a hike of 2.80 miles from the nearest road crossing to the point you begin work.
- Section 11e Tennessee – 3.40 miles; this section runs from the Ocoee River and Thunder Rock Campground on the north to FS Road 221 on the south end.
- Section 15a Tennessee – 4.50 miles; this section begins on the south at the trail intersection with the Joe Brown Highway (dirt.)
- Section 16c Tennessee – 3.2 miles; this remote section largely follows Brookshire Creek, requires a hike in from the nearest road to reach either end, and is in a Wilderness Study Area (no power tools.)

At minimum, a section maintainer is responsible to keep the trail open and passable. In very general terms, this entails clearing brush along the trail corridor in the summer, with loppers and either a power brush cutter or a swing blade, and removing limbs and snags from the trail in the winter. Spring and fall are ideal for refreshing blazes and cleaning out water diversions, as well as removing limbs and snags (Note: to maintain consistency and quality of blazing, it is requested that you receive special instructions from a Director or their designee before assuming this responsibility.) Section maintainers are required to report their travel and work hours and a brief summary of work completed by e-mail or letter to the appropriate Maintenance Director in a timely manner. Any large scale work needed is to be brought to the Maintenance Director's attention so that a group work trip can be scheduled to accomplish it safely and efficiently. One of the oft forgotten but critical responsibilities of a maintainer is to let us know when you are no longer able to care for your section, for whatever reason, so we can find a temporary or permanent replacement.

If you think section maintenance might be a "fit" for you, contact the appropriate Maintenance Director; Tom Keene for the sections south of the Ocoee River, or Bill Hodge for sections north of the Ocoee River and south of the Great Smokey Mtn. National Park. You can always make your availability known through the "Contact Us" link on the web site and it will be forwarded to the appropriate party.

I would like to acknowledge all the contributions of time and energy from current and past section maintainers. It would be impossible to keep the trail open without you. As always, thanks for your continued support of the BMT. See you on the trail!

Annual Walk-Thru

BMTA Members, ALL HANDS ON DECK!

Time to get ready for the heavy hiking season by taking a snapshot of the entire trail on a single day.

This year we are splitting the walk-thru dates to allow those so inclined to participate twice – and maybe walk a new section of the trail! Here are the dates:

Saturday 3 May for TN/NC sections north of U.S. 64.

Saturday 17 May for GA sections plus TN section south of U.S. 64

Even if you are not able to walk a section you can help, and get in on the fun, by [serving as a shuttle driver](#) for those who do walk.

What It Is

Once each year, the BMTA members hike and report on trail conditions. We cover all 200 miles south of the Smokies. The information gathered on problem trail conditions is collected by Maintenance Directors, used to determine future work-trips, and relayed to section maintainers so that repairs can be made. It's a vital audit of trail conditions. It's also a rewarding way to enjoy a hike in the woods on the BMT.

To Participate

The BMTA welcomes all to take part in the Annual Walk-Thru. If you'd like to help but prefer not to hike, car shuttles are needed and this is a great way to contribute. Shuttle drivers free up the hikers so that more trail can be covered. This valuable service is much appreciated. Please contact a Maintenance Director (see below) to volunteer.

For hikers, we ask that you hike in pairs. One person from each party is asked to download and review an [Annual Walk-Thru Report Form](#), fill it out, and return it via either email to (walk-thru@bmta.org) or US mail to (PO Box 6, Cherry Log, GA 30522) within one week of completing the walk thru.

Thank you for helping us gather this important information on trail conditions.

Questions? For Georgia sections, contact Tom Keene at 770-548-4935; for North Carolina and Tennessee, contact Bill Hodge or Rick Harris at 513-260-1184 or 423-253-6358. Either can also be reached by sending an email to (walk-thru@bmta.org). Direct your question to them by name.



How Many BMTA Experts Does It Require To Free A Chainsaw & How Long?



Licklog March 8 GA Work Trip Puzzler:

By **George Owen, Co-Leader**

Okay, so the chainsaw is stuck in a tree midday near Licklog Mountain's summit. As with our usual flair for trail work innovation, nobody considered bringing wedges. So how many people and how long did it take to free it?

ANSWER: Four people, 2.5 hours. The chainsaw operator and his assistant tried everything imaginable for much of two hours. Then a runner was sent down the

mountain to find the one person with a small saw to open a new approach to the problem. The person with the saw had to go get it. Back up the hill goes the runner, and a little later BRAVO! A chainsaw is free! (Names of the guys operating the saw up the mountain are here withheld to forestall further embarrassment, so we won't go further than to say the key one has a wife named Linda!) Well, that's one way to get in plenty of hours and arrive back at the trucks last. And needless to say, not a heck of a lot of the trees strewn across the trail atop Licklog were removed. (This whole chainsaw event made most governmental operations look absolutely efficient!)

Y'know, tromping in to work on Licklog Mountain, the center peak of the most difficult section of the GA BMT, is quite a task in itself. However, 13 people showed up to try. Yes, most of us spent our hours there re-sidehilling (widening) the trail. Darcy Douglas meanwhile was repainting the dull blazing and putting in new ones as needed and double blazes where best. We knew that besides the hard trek in, the amount of work needed would not probably be finished to the top of Licklog. It wasn't. Oh, well – it's at least a lot better than it was.

Oh, was it a gorgeous day! Blue sky, sunny, about 60 degrees – best kind of trail-working weather. The viewing from the near-summit overlook of Wallalah Mountain southward was terrific.

The day began for part of the crew at the Village Restaurant as usual for breakfast. Others met us at the Skeenah Creek crossing of the BMT at Hwy. 60. From there all of us, but one, journeyed by trucks to a special place near the trail on the high mountainside property of friends of the trail. (The one who didn't chose to walk that first uphill mile from Hwy 60, to show how superior to the rest a man over 80 could be – yep, Walt Cook put in the extra distance.)

The day ended with five of us eating heartily as usual at the Pink Pig. Yep, 'twas another great and memorable BMTA work trip, with all back safely. **IMPORTANT:** Several on this trip were first-timers; a big thanks for coming. Thanks also go out to my co-leader Barry Allen for all the work he put in planning this trip and for picking up and returning the tools. Finally, we had the cutest 7-year-old kid on the trip, Alex, the son of Susan Burkley – he's a great little uphill hiker!

CREW (all members but Alex): Barry Allen, Sean Blanton, David Blount, Susan Burkley with son Alex, Robert Collins, Walt Cook, Darcy Douglas, Jack Dugger, Russ Johnson, Dan Norman, George Owen, Tracy Sheffield

TOTAL HOURS WORKED: 94.5

TOTAL HOURS TRAVELED: 38.75

Yellow Creek Reroute Update, by Dick Evans

Some things regarding the Yellow Creek Reroute near the Tennessee/North Carolina border have changed a bit, so I wanted to update the membership about the current status. A general map, courtesy of Ernie Engman's Thru Hiker Guide (available for sale in the BMTA Store), will help orient folks. Because we have several work projects within the next six weeks, I will put things in chronological order.



At this point, Section 1, from the Meadow Branch Road/Route 129 junction to Old Field Gap Road, has been cleared and is easily passable. It will need a brush cutter or weed whacker trip at some time this Spring. In addition, the bridge at the start of this section, although usable, will need to be replaced. Since this is on private property, additional coordination will be needed. The USFS has an engineered design for this location, and price estimates are being prepared. Jill Gottesman of the Wilderness Society and I led a local hike on it and the general opinion was, "Fantastic!". On the Board of Directors Meeting [April 5th](#), we will hike this section in the afternoon.

[March 31 & April 1, 3 and 4](#) - A Sierra Club Work Trip, based at Fontana Village, will address the rehabilitation of Section 4, between Fontana Village and Green Gap on the ridge south of the village. This is about 1.25 miles of trail. If time allows, they will continue east on the ridge to join the Appalachian Trail at Walker Gap (not shown). At the same time, Rick Harris and I, in coordination with Fontana Village and the Forest Service, will determine the routing of the Benton MacKaye Trail between Fontana Village area and the connection to the Appalachian Trail near Fontana Village. This may in part follow parts of existing bike trails, etc.

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April 15 - This will be a large BMTA Work Trip to clear Section 3 of Trail between the Powerline Crossing and Green Gap, some 2.5 miles or so. I have over 20 folks who have committed to this trip so far, but I still need a couple more folks with brushcutters/weedwhackers.

April 26 - BMTA Work Trip. Current plan for that day is to flag and partially clear Section 2 between Old Field Gap Road and the end of the Forest Service Road, in preparation for the American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation in May. This is about 2.8 miles.

May 5,6 & 8 - American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation, staged out of Cheoah Point Campground. Free camping is available for BMTA volunteers who wish to join these folks working on Section 2.

May 9 - The AHS folks and BMTA Volunteers will join a work trip of the Partners of the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness in clearing the trails in the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest.

May 24 - BMTA Work Trip - This trip will focus on finishing sections of the reroute and putting up signs on the new route.

May 27/28 - Overnight trip in the Great Smoky Mountains Park to remove old trail route signage and install new signs along the Lakeshore Trail.

May 30 - Opening Celebration at 10 AM, followed by hikes on the trail.

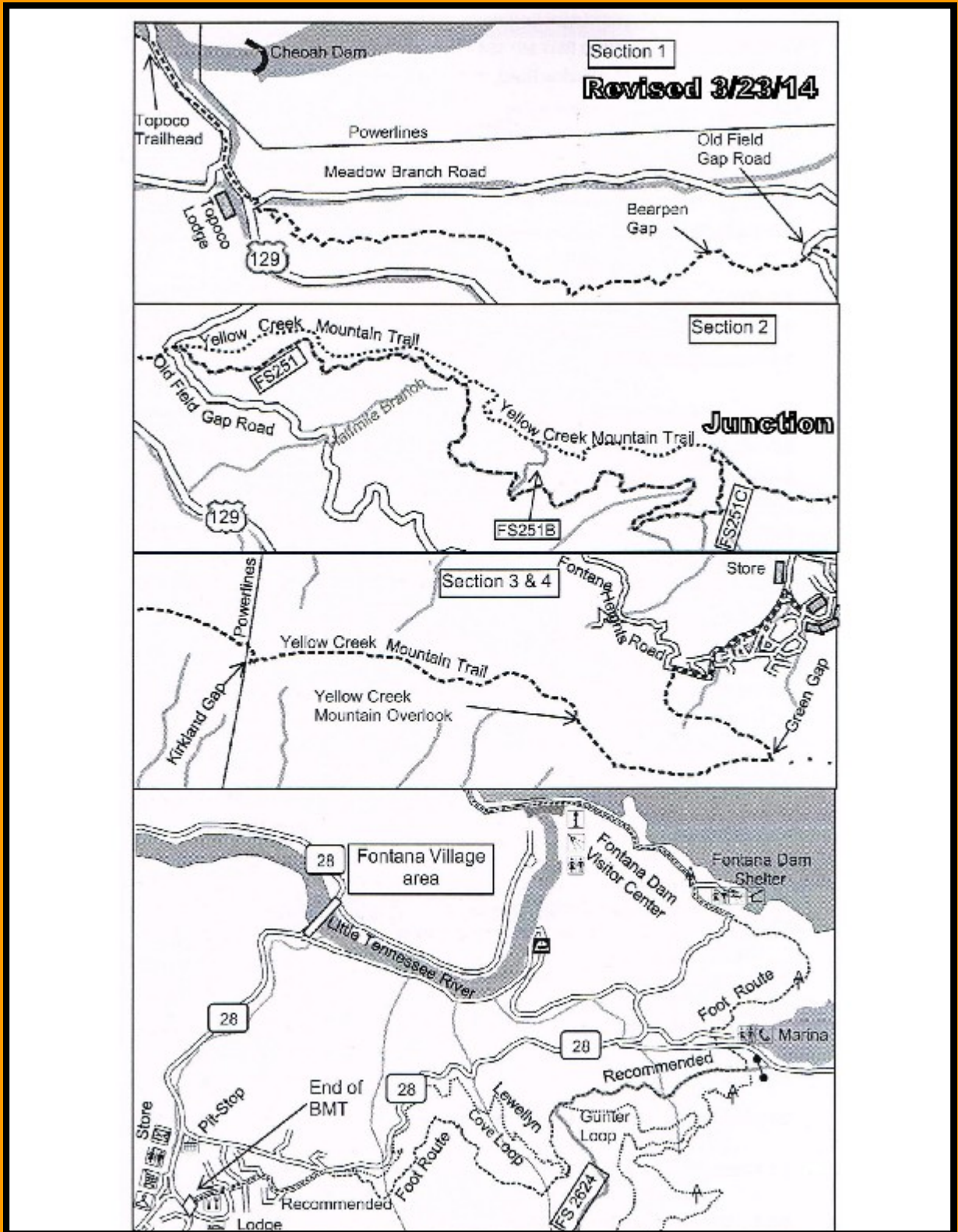
If you would like to join any of these trips, please email me at:

"bmta@frontier.com" for full details.

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TN/NC Work-Trips for March

March 10, 2014

Tellico River to the top of Sugar Mtn (Betty Petty's section of trail (now Ralph Van Pelt's), done by Darcy Douglas and Gilbert Treadwell on [Monday](#) of this week.

We trimmed the rhododendron at the beginning of the trail, we removed the burn notice per the USFS Tellico district instructions, we put the sign back into the ground (but it had been TORN off, so is shorter and needs to be replaced sometime), we blazed the little bridge and enough for the section north that folks could at least begin it in the correct direction, AND we blazed the section we'll be on [this Saturday](#), most of the way. We will go back to finish the job, but think we did all the confusing points, and all the switchbacks, so folks shouldn't get lost. We finally stopped to get out before dark at that open, cove-like, area with large rocks...

14 Work Hours

13 Travel Hours

March 14, 2014

Jim Debernardi and I logged out the BMT from Sugar Mtn to the Tellico River [today](#). Work time each 6 hours. Driving time for me 30 minutes, for Jim 1 hr. We cut about 20 logs with chainsaw and threw a lot of other small logs and limbs off the trail. So....

Rick Harris 6.5 hours

Jim Debernardi 7 hours

March 15, 2014

The following are the hours worked by the BMTA and Chattanooga Hiking Club members on Section 16e of the BMT today, clearing brush along the trail. This work was completed during the hike to honor former BMTA President Betty Petty, recently deceased, who faithfully maintained this section for several years.

Brenda Harris, Rick Harris, Ralph VanPelt, David Blount, Boe Rudder, Donald Box, Cheryl Carico, Gwen Brimer, Robert Butterfield, Darcy Douglas, George Owen, Tom Keene, Jane Keene, and Don Bodly.

Total Work Hours 46.5

Total Travel Hours 56

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BMTA TN/NC Work Trip - Monday, [March 24](#) - John Muir Trail Coker Creek to Big Bend - Crews met behind the Skyway Visitor Center at 9 AM and worked the following areas.

- Coker Creek toward Towee Creek
- Towee Creek toward Coker Creek, meet in the middle
- Big Bend to Towee Creek

Richard Harris, 2 hrs travel, 6.5 hours work = 8.5 hours

Bill Lundin (section maintainer), 3 hrs travel, 6.5 hours work = 9.5 hours

Tyler McWain, 3 hrs travel, 6.5 hours work = 9.5 hours

Prescribed Burn Alert

By David Blount

Every week in the past month or so, one or more Forest Districts through which the BMT passes has announced plans for a controlled burn. These burns are necessary to prevent and alleviate the accumulation of “fuel” on or near the forest floor. Left unchecked, this fuel can become fodder for large scale wildfires during the summer and fall seasons. Another rationale for these burns is habitat management for certain species of plants and animals.

The announcements for these events are too numerous to forward to the membership and the dates are often uncertain. The go – no go decision for a burn is often made the day before a prescribed burn and is based upon temperature, humidity, wind, and other critical factors. Trail sections passing through or adjacent to the planned burn will be signed closed during the duration of these events. However, other nearby sections which may not be subject to imminent threat of fire may still be subject to unpleasant levels of smoke.

If you are planning a long hike or backpacking trip, you would be well advised to contact the USFS District office for the area you will visit to see if controlled burns are being planned. Contact information for the various Ranger Districts as well as the Forest Supervisor’s offices can be found using the Federal Agency Partners link on the [bmta.org](#) home page. A few more minutes spent in the planning stage can help ensure your visit to the trail is a pleasant one!

Annual Appalachian Trail Kick-Off

By Marge Heller

The BMTA was well represented at the 13th Annual Appalachian Trail Kick-Off Weekend, March 7-9. Held at Amicalola Falls State Park Lodge, along with various display booths, there were many interesting talks, related to hiking, given all weekend. Board Member Bob Ruby's [Saturday](#) morning slide presentation, on the BMT, was well received by over 100 attendees. Ralph and Marge Heller manned the BMTA Display and shared information on our trail.

Always held in March, each year this event continues to grow. Plan on attending in 2015. No registration fees - just come and enjoy!



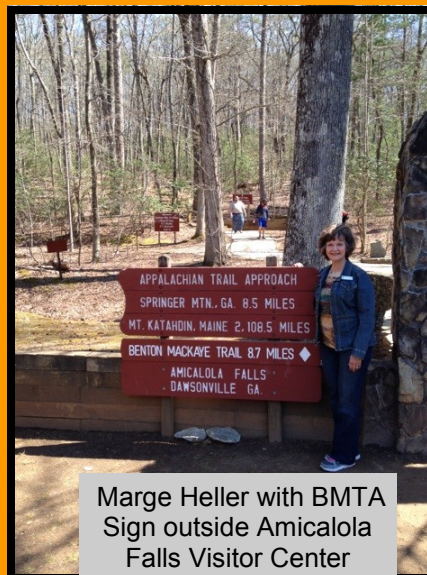
Ralph Heller with display



View from our display area at Lodge



BMTA Map hanging in Amicalola Falls Visitor Center



Marge Heller with BMTA Sign outside Amicalola Falls Visitor Center



Bob Ruby giving presentation

News On The Street

February 2014 ...

Connor Bayliss and his father Steve, planted another new BMTA trail sign on top of Fowler Mountain this past February. The big bonus from this trip was Connor finding a cast iron frying pan discarded beside the trail just South of Holloway Gap and carrying it 5 miles back to the car. As Steve says, "Quite a door prize."



Chainsaw Recertification Class

We will be conducting a chainsaw re-certification course on Saturday [April 26th](#), 2014 on the Conasauga Ranger District. This one-day course is intended for those volunteers who have already completed the full (initial) chainsaw course and are seeking re-certification, which is required every three years. Please note that you **MUST** have current CPR/First Aid in order to be accepted into this re-certification course. We are also limiting this training to those volunteers who are actively utilizing their chainsaw skills as a volunteer for the Forest Service. We will be verifying your volunteer status with the district recreation managers, and you must be able to show proof of CPR/First aid certification. This is a RE-CERTIFICATION class. We MAY allow a limited number of new sawyers in this class depending on how many recerts we have, but it will be short notice.

For Georgia BMTA members, we will also be holding a class for you this fall. Unless you have special circumstances, please don't enroll in this class.

Contact me directly (see below) if you want to attend.

Thanks for all you do for our trails!

Regards, Jim

Richard T. "Jim" Holland
175 Hells Hollow Drive
Blue Ridge, GA 30513
706-258-2830
lanconn@tds.net
www.threecreeksarabians.com



UGA Extension Publishes “Native Plants Of North Georgia” Application For iPhones, iPads and Android Devices

Spring is around the corner, and University of Georgia Extension has a new app to help families and outdoor enthusiasts make the most of those first springtime hikes.

“Native Plants of North Georgia,” now available for iPad, iPhone and Android devices, is a consumer-oriented field guide of the flowers, trees, ferns and shrubs that populate North Georgia’s yards and forests.

Stationed in the heart of the Chattahoochee National Forest, Mickey Cummings, UGA Extension coordinator for Union County and the app’s content author, has spent his career identifying plants for day-trippers, hikers and homeowners in North Georgia.

“I started wanting to create a collection of photographs that backpackers could use to identify plants on the trail,” Cummings said. “All the reference material I was working with was too large to pack, and we wanted something that would be easy for people to use.”

He first developed a hard copy of his guide, a pocket-sized laminated flipbook, in [May 2008](#) to help the public identify local plants on the fly. Since then, UGA Extension has sold more than 1,000 copies of that original book, and the free online edition has been viewed more than 6,000 times.

Representatives from Southern Regional Extension Forestry, UGA Extension and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Office of Information Technology decided to use the popular guide as a pilot project in their development of mobile applications for UGA Extension.

The app, developed by application programmer Benaiah Morgan Pitts, allows the public to browse photos of plants organized by their blooming periods and includes leaf and bloom descriptions as well as their scientific and common names.

Other UGA Extension faculty members have collaborated on apps in recent years, mostly focusing on horticulture, pest management and turf grass management. However, “Native Plants of North Georgia” is the first app to be produced by the UGA Extension publications and Extension information technology team.

All versions of this app are free and ready for download through the Apple App Store and Google Play. A PDF version of the guide is available for free download and the original pocket-sized flipbooks are available for purchase (\$12) at www.caes.uga.edu/publications.

For an online version of this release, see <http://news.uga.edu/releases/article/uga-extension-publishes-first-app-for-iphones-ipads-and-android-devices/>

50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act

By Doug Byerly : Cherokee National Forest

At our annual manager's meeting with the Benton MacKaye Trail Association last month, I informed the Association that the Cherokee NF would be featuring a different Congressionally designated Wilderness and day hike each month in 2014 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

Here's our planned schedule. As many as four hiking opportunities could feature sections of the BMT. I've highlighted them in the table below. We'll add these hikes to the Cherokee NF website at the beginning of the month in which they are scheduled. The first hike affecting the BMT is not scheduled until August. We'll include a direct link to the BMTA website as part of the day hike description. Thanks for everyone's help in providing these outstanding opportunities. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Doug

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cherokee/home/?cid=stelprdb5448076>

Planned Hiking Schedule

Month of 2014	Wilderness in Cherokee National Forest	Featured Day-Hike
February	Gee Creek	To Gee Creek Falls via FS Trail #191 Gee Creek Falls
March	Sampson Mountain	To Squibb Falls via FS Trail#23 Squibb Falls from Horse Creek Recreation Area
April	Citico Creek	To Falls Branch Falls via FS Trail #87 Falls Branch from Cherohala Skyway
May	Bald River Gorge	Through Bald River Gorge via FS Trail #88 Bald River
June	Unaka Mountain	To Rock Creek Falls via FS Trail #148 Rock Creek Falls from Rock Creek Recreation Area
July	Pond Mountain	To Laurel Falls via FS #1 Appalachian Trail from Dennis Cove Trailhead or Hampton Trailhead
August	Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock	To Lower Falls via FS Trail #42 Slickrock Creek or loop option with FS Trail #45 Ike Branch
September	Upper Bald River W.S.A.	To Upper Bald River Falls via FS Trail #180 Brookshire Creek
October	Big Frog	To Big Frog Summit via FS Trail #64 Big Frog & FS Trail #145 Hemp Top
November	Big Laurel Branch	To View at Vandeventer Shelter via FS Trail #1 Appalachian Trail
December	Little Frog Mountain	To Rock Creek via FS Trail #125 Rock Creek. Optional connection to the Ocoee Whitewater Center via FS Trail #76 Dry Pond Lead and FS Trail #332 Rhododendron Trail

Biennial Conference for All Hikers

Coming this September 18-21 (Thursday-Sunday)

Biennial Conference for All Hikers

Sponsored by

Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition

At

Blairsville, GA New Conference Center

And

Nearby Vogel State Park

- All in the North GA Mountains, near both NC and TN -
Workshops aplenty, both new and previous favorites

Saturday Banquet Speaker: Ron Tipton,
New Executive Director of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy

- Wonderful, beautiful hikes to nearby mountaintop vistas and
waterfalls –
(Nearby Appalachian Trail and Benton MacKaye Trail featured)

Details of registration, local housing facilities (inns, cottages, camping), and
costs/fees coming your way later March