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President:	David Blount
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

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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ANNUAL MEETING OCTOBER 17-19, 2014

By Darcy Douglas

Our Annual Meeting will be held this year at Coker Creek Village the weekend of October 17-19. Coker Creek is located on Hwy. 68 in Tennessee between Ducktown and Tellico Plains. We have stayed here before and enjoyed it thoroughly!



There are several arrangements for places to spend the night. There are bunk houses and cabins, as set out below. Food is served in the cafeteria, and the lunch Saturday will be a brown bag lunch for our hikes.

Each person needs to make his or her own reservations for meals as well as for preferred sleeping quarters.

We will have hikes scheduled Friday, a learning activity and social time on Friday evening, hikes Saturday, then the meeting itself late afternoon and evening. We will elect officers for 2015 and hear the State of the Trail report. Reports from Board members regarding membership, finances, and accomplishments of the year will also be shared. I hope you enjoy our entertainment after the formal part of the meeting! More later on that...

Please make your reservations through Leal at Coker Creek. She can be flexible with the number of nights and meals – just let her know what you need when you call or email.

Leal Giddens - Office Manager

Coker Creek Village

Email: info@cokercreekvillage.com

Telephone: 800-448-9580

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Annual Meeting Options

5 Meals*/2 Nights Lodging***	Per Person:
Bunk House	\$115
Leadership Cabin	\$155
3 Meals**/1 Night Lodging	
Bunk House	\$72
Leadership Cabin	\$112
Saturday Lunch and Dinner Only	\$20

The above options can be modified to fit each attendee's needs during the weekend.

Lunch on Saturday will be a brown bag lunch.

- * Dinner Friday through breakfast Sunday
- ** Lunch Saturday through breakfast Sunday
- *** Bunk house lodging offers sleeping areas only, with cabins that sleep from 4 per cabin up to 25. Smaller cabins (sleeping 6 and under and one 12-sleeper) use an area shower house; larger cabins (sleeping 8 and up) have baths in the cabins. This will be shared housing for your group. Each person will provide his own linens (twin bed sheets or sleeping bag, pillow, towels).

Leadership Cabins are upscale cottages, sleeping 2-4 (depending on bed configuration)
 Each cabin has a queen bed (two cabins have sets of bunk beds), a private bath,
 sitting area, small refrigerator, microwave oven, all linens provided.
 There are eight (8) of these.

Presidents Message

Walk With Me a Moment.....



I have been returning often to a particular theme in my messages as I believe it epitomizes the purpose of the Benton Mackaye Trail Association – maintenance. The condition of the trail is a first and lasting impression for all who visit and spend time there.

We recently completed the annual walk-thru of the entire trail and the findings of all who participated should help us to focus our efforts over the coming months where they are most needed. Thanks to all who turned out on the first Saturday of May to walk a section in Tennessee or North Carolina and to those who walked a Georgia section on the third Saturday of May. Special thanks go out to Rick Harris and Tom Keene for planning and coordinating the events.

We have a number of members who have recently volunteered and completed the requirements to become section maintainers. The list includes Russ Johnson, Steve Davis, Keith Truppi, Tracy Sheffield, and Ralph Van Pelt. I would like to personally thank each of you and welcome you to the ranks of the section maintainers. We also have some “maintainers in training” who only need to finish a few requirements before their name is associated with a particular section. I believe Dick Evans is already interviewing and checking credentials for section maintainers for the new Yellow Creek Reroute, as well.

Every bit as important as new or long time section maintainers are those who turn out regularly for the monthly work trips in all three states. It is on these outings that some of the major repair work takes place, freeing section maintainers to focus on the more routine tasks of keeping the trail open and safe. The monthly work trips in June will take place on National Trails Day which is June 7. The TN/NC trip, led by Rick Harris, will be based out of Indian Boundary Campground off the Cherohala Skyway and the Georgia trip, led by Darcy Douglas, will be on Section 1b near Springer Mountain. Food will be provided at or following both events if you need a little extra incentive. There will also be a fun hike on June 6th from Hwy 60 to the Swinging Bridge and back. I hope you will join us for one of these events.

Spring is winding to an end and summer is on the horizon. We have experienced really cool temperatures late into the year and that has made the work at hand more enjoyable (tolerable) on many days this spring. As we transition into the hot months, I ask that you keep up your resolve to attend the monthly work trips or to visit your sections often enough to ensure the trail remains in good shape. For those who primarily hike, we depend upon your reports of downed trees or other conditions which may require a maintenance trip. Your reports are critical to our maintenance plans and are greatly appreciated. Working together, we can ensure a “footpath for generations to follow.”

See you on the trail!

David

Wet, Wild, and Productive Big Frog Adventure Worktrip, Part Two

By Tom Keene

BMTA President David Blount put it nicely, "I think Georgia now has its very own Heart of Darkness." David's comment came in the course of a two hour, rain-soaked walk into the worksite for the May 10 work-trip in the Big Frog Wilderness.

Since last November, Section 11 from the GA/TN line to US 64 near the Olympic Whitewater Center has been assigned to the Georgia group to maintain. It's a long walk in and out for work in the interior of the Big Frog Wilderness. It may not be quite as remote as the original BMT Heart of Darkness (Section 16 between Sandy Gap and Sledrunner Gap) but it's a trek to get to the work! It's also beautiful territory. On May 10 the flame azaleas were at full cry. We got the full spectrum: yellows, oranges and reds.

We probably should stop calling it a Georgia worktrip. Not only was it in Tennessee but two Volunteers were part of our group of ten: James Anderson, who grew up in the area and has long maintained sub-section 11d, and Keith Truppi newly assigned (and most welcome!) maintainer for 11c -- the section we have worked the last two months. Barry Allen orchestrated and led the trip, which also included Phil Guhl, Brian Trinkle, Gerrit Voogt, Doug Kleiber, Steve Davis (maintainer of 11a&b), the aforementioned David Blount and yours truly.

The ten of us put in a long day: 70 hours of walking in and out and working in between. Happily, the rain stopped for the afternoon. We put a major dent in the sidehill refreshing needed on 11c and cleared some vegetation as well. One more worktrip and we should have the sub-section in pretty good shape for Keith Truppi's tender care.

Thanks to Barry for another great job leading the trip and to all who helped out. Well done!



Kneeling: Keith Truppi. Standing from left: James Anderson, Steve Davis, Doug Kleiber, David Blount, Brian Trinkle, Barry Allen, Gerrit Voogt, Phil Guhl. Photo by TKeene

WILDERNESS ACT ANNIVERSARY

2014 is the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act in our beautiful country. A number of events have been planned in the Southeast to celebrate this event. The Great Smoky Mountain National Park, which is managed as wilderness, and through which about a third of our trail passes, has events planned. The Cherokee National Forest has monthly hikes scheduled in wilderness areas, several of which will be on the Benton MacKaye Trail. Roughly a third of our trail is in this forest, too. Georgia and the Chattahoochee National Forest also have events planned. Our club will be participating on September 7 in Dahlonega, Georgia. We sincerely hope you will avail yourself of some of these opportunities to support this excellent bill which has enabled keeping wildlife healthy, waters pristine, and the forest developing as nature would have it in large enough tracts to considerably add to the health of people in our country.



NATIONAL TRAILS DAY With The Benton MacKaye In Georgia June 7, 2014



Come one, come all!!! On Saturday, June 7, we'll work on the section of trail between Big Stamp Gap and the AT parking lot. This event will take the place of our normal second Saturday work trip for June. Because of likely heavy AT traffic, we'll park at Big Stamp Gap and walk to the work site from there. We meet at 8:00 at the Hardee's in Ellijay, then again at the church at the base of FS42 on Doublehead Gap Road about 9:00. Please bring lots of water to drink and a "snack" type lunch since we'll be having a cookout at President David's sister's pavilion nearby afterward, eating around 3:00. There will be food for the vegetarians in our midst, too. Please let me know you will be coming by email or calling so we can have 1- enough tools and 2 - enough food. Looking forward to having you honor National Trails Day by working on the beautiful and primitive BMT.

Darcy's contact information: bmtadarcy@yahoo.com and 404-497-0818 (home number, so don't wait until the last minute to call this one, OK?)

Upcoming Hikes By Ralph Heller – Hiking Director

We are having two hikes in June.

Friday June 6: Fun hike on the BMT to the Toccoa River Suspension Bridge from Highway 60. This is an easy 3.5 mile trek to the bridge with a moderate climb at the start and then a gentle downhill for the rest of the hike. The days are getting warmer, so bring lots of water and some insect repellent. We will eat lunch at the bridge. Hike leader is Ralph Heller. To sign up and for meeting location and time call 706-235-9760. This is one of our most popular hikes, so let's have a good turnout.

Saturday June 21: Boyd Gap to Ocoee Whitewater Center. This hike takes you from Boyd Gap off Highway 64 down to the Old Copper Road and on to the Whitewater Center. Another easy hike, this offers a chance to take a cool dip in the Blue Hole swimming hole in the Ocoee River. Bring lunch. Hike Leader is Hank Baudet. To sign up and for meeting location and time call Hank at 706-492-4318.

I am open to suggestions for future hikes and also looking for hike leaders. Please let me know if we should do some hikes which would require a little more travel distance if they give a good hiking experience. I have been trying to keep the hikes local to the north Georgia area near the BMT. Again, I can be contacted at 770-235-9760

Dr. Richard Harris ... Retired Friday May 16

By Darcy Douglas

This is a very special week at CCHMC. Dr. Richard Harris will be retiring on Friday, May 16. Dr. Harris came to Cincinnati Children's in 1979 and established the Bone Marrow Transplantation program in 1980. He performed the first bone marrow transplant at [Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center](#) in April 1981. He also performed the first cord blood transplant in the United States and the first transplant for sickle cell disease in the United States. Through Dr. Harris' years of leadership, the Bone Marrow Transplantation program prospered to become one of the premier pediatric transplant programs in the country. Those of us who know about HLH understand how vital bone marrow transplants are to our patients. Dr. Harris is also one of only five people in history to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Fanconi Anemia Research Fund. Please help me congratulate Dr. Harris for his well-deserved retirement!



Volunteer Vacation Workers Help With Yellow Creek Re-Route

By Kim Hainge

This month, a crew of individuals came from all over the world to help prepare the section of the Benton MacKaye Trail that is being rerouted away from the pavement of 129 and 28 and also to help clear invasive plants from the double loop trail of the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest.

The American Hiking Society has a program that they call "Volunteer Vacations". Their website states that this year "they have over 60 projects across the country. Each crew consists of 6-15 volunteers plus a crew leader."

Ed Benson, the crew leader for this adventure, says that this is his third trip to the area. "It is so beautiful here. I do this because I love spending my time with people that are drawn to these working vacations in the wilderness. I know that I will find new friends that I just haven't met yet. The biggest challenge I find is food preparation. It is my job to select and prepare the food for these folks. When they sign up they write whether they are Vegan, vegetarian, glucose intolerant, lactose intolerant or gluten-free. I have to make sure that everyone gets the food they require."



New Stair Construction

Sam Gordon traveled here from the North island of New Zealand. He plans to visit several different parts of the United States. "I checked the internet web site and read through all the opportunities listed. The Great Smoky Mountain National Forest sounded very scenic and I had not been to this part of the country before. "Gordon points to the moderately steep trail of Joyce Kilmer, "the hikes are rated; easy, moderate, strenuous and very strenuous. This trip is rated moderate and I have had no trouble hiking these trails. I attended a wedding in Indianapolis and then traveled to Knoxville by bus. A member of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association picked me up there and brought me to Rattler Ford Campground to join everyone else."

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Cheryl Maschino arrived from Maine. She has been to the Smokies a number of times and absolutely loves it. Hot and tired, she is still smiling and says, "This time we found the trail covered with leaves which we had to remove from several areas. Plus we cut into the mountainside on the inside of the trail so that the trail would be wider. It thrills me to know that I was part of the group that helped move people off of the dangerous road and into the wilderness."

Larry Van Dyke, another volunteer vacationer, did some very heavy duty work repairing and replacing stairs that were broken down, rotting and slippery. Only about half of them were in place. A good stairway reduces erosion and makes it much easier for hikers to descend without slipping. Members of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association joined the volunteers so that the re-routed trail section will be ready for its grand opening at the end of May.

The hard working vacationers worked on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday on the Benton MacKaye Trail. Wednesday was a planned fun day and they were given the opportunity of a pontoon boat ride on the Santeetlah Lake captained by Dave Hagan. During the boat ride a bald eagle circled the boat two or three times. For many of the volunteers, it was the first time they had ever seen a live bald eagle. Friday they joined several other volunteer groups for a work day at the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest.

Many of the crew said that they would be returning to Graham County again, some with each other. Sharing a campsite and spending the evenings around a campfire cemented new friendships. "It's all about meeting people with similar likes and being able to help make a difference." says Benson.

Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest Workday ... May 9, 2014

By Kim Hainge

On Friday, May 9, members of the Partners of the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, the American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacationers, the U. S. Forest Service, and members of the Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team (GREAT) all took part in the work day scheduled to improve and protect the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest.

Workers accomplished a number of different necessary jobs during the day. One group worked along the double loop trail to remove the invasive plants that have encroached into the forest. This has occurred because of the increased amount of light that is reaching the forest floor due to the death of the giant Eastern Hemlocks killed by the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. Wild blackberry is the most aggressive plant that needs to be cut back to make the trails passable. A multiflora rose was also dug out and removed before it could establish itself.



Old locust fencing was removed and replaced with new, which entailed special post hole digging equipment. Brush and debris was cleaned up all along the entrance road and parking area. Trees were trimmed and mulch was spread along foot paths in the parking area.

The volunteers came armed with loppers, pruning shears, shovels, rakes and strong leather gloves. A hot dog lunch was provided by the Partners of Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness, along with lots of water, ice tea and fruit juice. Tremendous progress was made and Graham County residents should take the opportunity as soon as they can to view the results.

Yellow Creek Reroute Project Update

By Dick Evans

The Yellow Creek Reroute Project on the Benton MacKaye Trail will open the new section of trail on [May 30th](#) as scheduled. This is a 21 mile reroute, and will add 4.8 miles to the overall length of the Benton MacKaye Trail. It will replace the 3.5 mile road walk along Routes 129 and 28, with a shorter and much safer road walk of 0.5 miles.

Hikers will now be able to use facilities at Fontana Village for resupply as well as getting the required Backcountry Camping Permit for the National Park.



Wilscot Gap to Skeenah Gap ...

By Joy Forehand

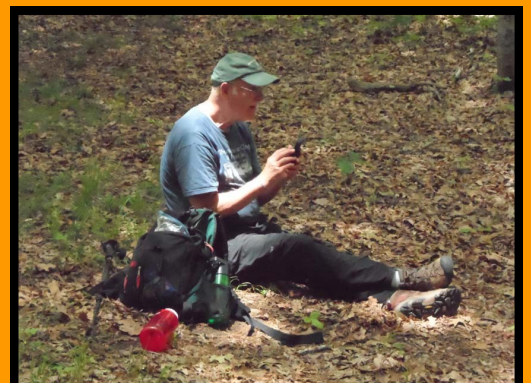
On a balmy May 21st **Wednesday** morning four members of the BMTA – Nancy Sauls, Ralph Heller, Ken Cissna and Joy Forehand – set out on a 5.2 mile hike from Wilscot Gap to Skeenah Gap.

This time of year the Skeenah Gap section of the BMT is best known for the Mountain Laurel which usually are loaded with white & pink blossoms ... so much so that a canopy is created over much of the trail. Alas, that was not the case this year. The Mountain Laurel are producing copious amounts of shiny green leaves, but very few blossoms. Still it was a beautiful sunny day with a gentle breeze and the temps under the forest canopy quite comfortable.



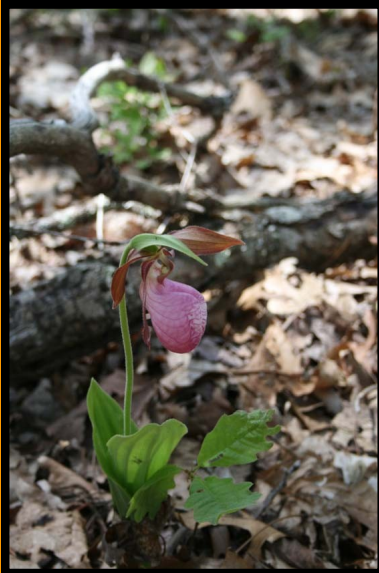
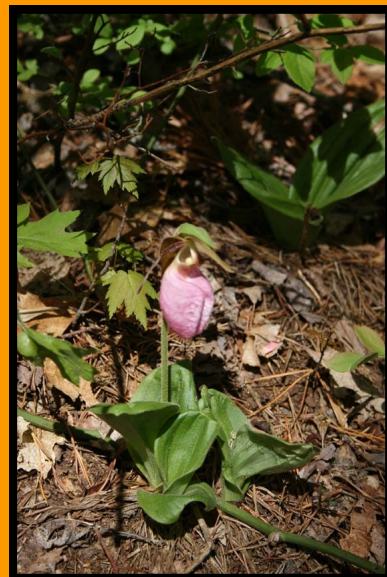
Along the way we encountered a small tree laying across the trail about a foot off the ground. Not wanting to "leave this for another day", Ralph Heller and Ken Cissna took turns sawing and maneuvering the tree until it no longer presented a problem.

We stopped for a leisurely lunch at Payne Gap and then continued on our way enjoying some far off mountain views, pine tree forests, a garden of Lady Slippers and, best yet, we found a couple of huge Mountain Laurels covered with blooms!



This will give you an idea of
the Lady Slipper season ...
gorgeous!!!

Compliments of
Joy Forehand
Pictures taken around
Weaver Creek



MOVIE NEWS AT AMICALOLA FALLS STATE PARK

By Marge Heller

At the end of April, Ralph and I took our friends, visiting us from England, to Amicalola Falls State Park. There we learned that the week before actors Robert Redford and Nick Nolte began to film a movie based on Bill Bryson's book: *A WALK IN THE WOODS*. Now we are wondering if our new BMT sign will make an appearance in their film (to be released in 2015).



Judy & Godfrey Thorpe checking out BMT sign.

Atlanta REI — Benton MacKaye Trail Presentation

Date: 6/18/2014

Event Location: Atlanta REI

Event Fee: Free

Time: 7:00 - 8:30 PM EDT

Presenter: Bob Ruby

Group Size: 20

Description: The Benton MacKaye Trail was described in a New York Times feature as "Appalachia's Other Trail." It almost 300 miles long, starting at Springer Mountain, GA and ending at Big Creek on the northeastern end of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It forms a large figure-eight with the southernmost portion of the A.T. and crosses some of the most remote backcountry and wilderness areas in GA, TN and NC. A young trail, completed in 2005, built and maintained by volunteers, the BMT is intended as a more-primitive, less-crowded trail alternative. This presentation includes a "virtual tour" of the BMT and will describe options for hiking the trail, including day-hikes, section-hikes and thru-hikes. New news for the BMT is a reroute of the segment just before entering the Smokies.



National Trails Day Event

Saturday, June 7, 2014



All are welcome to join us for a day of "Paying it Forward" to the Cherokee National Forest. Meet at the picnic area next to the beach at Indian Boundary Campground at 8 AM for free pastries provided by Tellico Grains and for orientation. Wear long pants and sturdy shoes, bring a lunch and plenty of water in a day pack. We will break up into crews of 8-10 people to work on a segment of trail somewhere in the local area. Then we will all return to the picnic area for a free dinner provided by the Tellico Outpost (pizza) and the Partners of the Cherokee National Forest (burgers, etc). Also upon returning at the end of the day, all participants will receive a free T-shirt commemorating the day. Kids are welcome as well but must be attended by a responsible parent or guardian or youth group leader (church, scouts, etc). This event also celebrates the naming of Tellico Plains as a Trail Town by the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition and the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. Partners include...



SEFTC BIENNIAL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 18-21, 2014

Union County Community Center/Vogel State Park - Blairsville, Georgia

**Friday (9/19): Presenter, Janet Zeller, Manager, U.S. Forest Service
Accessibility Office**

**Saturday (9/20): Speaker, Ron Tipton, Executive Director, Appalachian Trail
Conservancy**

-----General Schedule-----

Thursday, Sept. 18

11:00 a.m. - Registration desk opens at Community Center

1:00 p.m. – Short hikes available in area – depart Community Center parking

Friday, Sept. 19

9:00–11:40 a.m. – General Welcome and Opening Plenary Session

1:15–2:45 p.m. & 3:00-4:30 – Workshops

6:00-6:30 p.m. – Short lake/waterfall hike at Vogel State Park

*6:30 p.m. – Barbeque and program, indoor pavilion at Vogel State Park

Saturday, Sept. 20

Hike Day – Hikes begin as early as 8 & 9 a.m. – some are all day, some half-day

*6:00 p.m. Banquet, Brackett Center, Blairsville

Sunday, Sept. 21

8:30 – 10:00 a.m. – Workshops

10:05 – 10:45 a.m. – SEFTC General Business Meeting

11:00 a.m. Some short hikes or leave for home

**Indicates a separate meal fee shown on the registration form*

[Registration form is posted on the website](#)

<http://www.southeasternfoottrails.org/>

You must be registered to attend all sessions, hikes, dinners

Registration Fee: \$30 through August 30; \$40 September 1 and after