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**BMTA Headquarters**



## BMTA Tribute to Taylor Hamilton December 2015

### In Memory of Kathryn Taylor Hamilton

United States Forest Service

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, Blue Ridge Ranger District

By Barry Allen



On Wednesday, December 16, 2015 many in the trail community were saddened beyond measure when we learned of the sudden death of our Forest Service colleague, friend and advisor - **Kathryn Taylor Hamilton**

Having worked with Taylor closely during the last year, I was overwhelmed with the news when it hit on Wednesday morning. Taylor was the face of the Forest Service for many of us. She was the one we met and worked with on the trail. She was the one who answered our questions and showed us the right way. She was the one we turned to for extra tools, materials or hard hats. But more than anything, Taylor was the one who praised our efforts and encouraged our work.

Taylor was a gentle soul. I admired her graceful way of correcting our trail-building errors. In contrast to my own sometimes blunt speech, “Try doing it this way, not that way,” Taylor would often pick up a tool and begin working with you until you had it right. You understood by her actions what you needed to do differently. More often than not, she never had to tell you that you were doing something wrong. You just knew it. Taylor understood what was best for the trail. I knew what was the least amount of work. But Taylor and I never had an argument. She always won. It’s hard to explain, but if you worked with her, you’d probably understand.

For example, at Fall Branch Falls, Taylor wasn’t happy with the way the new route laid on a 200 foot dig. This portion of the trail was already in, but it just didn’t handle water correctly. She knew it and I knew it. I just didn’t want to admit it. Taylor waited until the end of the day, so she and I were the only ones around to discuss the problem. She showed me a new route – one that would take a great deal of work, but one that would shed water much better and was still within the NEPA corridor. We didn’t argue. There was no point – she was right. I changed the trail, and she won. But I won too. The trail is much better and will require less work in the long run. By the way, right after this discussion, Taylor sent me a note about help from the Youth Conservation Corps. She understood how much effort our group had already put into the trail, and she wanted these kids to be available to help.



Taylor, working  
with middle school  
children



Our thoughts and prayers go out to Taylor’s family – her mother, father, brother, sister, her National Forest Service family, both the Blue Ridge Ranger District in particular and the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest in general.

**We’ll miss you, Taylor.**

## President's Column

by Bob Ruby

### Taylor Hamilton – A Sad Loss

Although there are other articles covering the untimely passing of Taylor Hamilton, I want to add my own personal thoughts about our loss. As the Wilderness and Trails Technician for the Blue Ridge Ranger District, Taylor was our closest contact for the BMTA in Georgia. She was always highly professional and supportive of the BMT. Taylor's first act on coming aboard was to hike all the trails in her new district, including the BMT, in order to make a personal assessment of their condition and needs. She was always ready to help us with guidance and resources, such as the YCC group that she directed on the Fall Branch Falls reroute last summer. My last remembrance is working with her on the reroute the Saturday before her death. She worked hard all day, and at the end of the day she gave out Blue Ridge RD T-shirts for all who had put in at least ten hours on the project. I also spent about twenty minutes with her discussing implementation of the new BMTA Group Volunteer Agreement with the Forest Service. She had some good suggestions and said she would undertake to coordinate our new Volunteer Sign In/Out procedures in her District as well as working with us on project planning for 2016. Like many others I will truly miss Taylor. Our heartfelt condolences go to her family and to her colleagues in this time of grief.

### Completion Surge – Fall Branch Falls and Towee Creek

We are nearing completion of our two major reroute projects at Fall Branch Falls and Towee Creek. Both Barry Allen and Ken Jones have been leading surges that will result in completion early in the new year. These have been joint projects of BMTA with the local Blue Ridge and Ocoee Forest Service Districts. I want to thank the management and staff of these Districts for their support. I also want to thank the many members of the BMTA and other groups who have volunteered so many hours of their personal time. You all can take great personal pride and satisfaction in two jobs well done. I hope you enjoyed your time in the field and will be back for more as we head into 2016.

### Maintainers' Meeting

This is the last time that my column will tout the January 16 briefing for all maintainers. I hope you can attend. We have a lot of information to share on the new BMTA Group Volunteer Agreement with the Forest Service and its implications for our operations. **I hope all BMTA trail workers will plan to attend this briefing** which will feature an all-star list of presenters. It will be held at **9:30AM on Saturday, January 16, at the Craddock Center**, 186 Fred Craddock Dr, Cherry Log, GA 30522. The Craddock Center is the former church facility, just north of where the BMT crosses GA-515. **So we can have a count of attendees for planning, please let your primary Maintenance Director (Barry or Ken) know that you plan to attend.** Additional details will be posted on the website activities page and will be emailed to those who sign up.

### Roots Rated Write-ups and Other Publicity

I am pleased to report that the BMT got some more excellent recognition in the past month as a result of the outstanding efforts of our joint Publicity Chairpersons, Marge Heller and Marcia Lehman, with input from Rick Harris and myself. This time it is a couple of great write-ups on the rootsrated.com website by Atlanta-based food, fitness and lifestyle author Alexa Lampasona. The articles are at:

<https://rootsrated.com/stories/the-best-day-hikes-on-the-georgia-section-of-the-benton-mackaye-trail>

<https://rootsrated.com/stories/best-day-hikes-north-carolinatennessee-benton-mackaye-trail>

If you haven't seen it, rootsrated.com has write-ups on the best places for outdoor activities all over the country, as recommended by local experts.

Marge also submitted an article on page 8 of the Pickens County Progress newspaper which features the BMTA Trail Maintainer recognitions at the annual meeting: <http://www.iclassifiedsnetwork.com/editionviewer/default.aspx?Edition=7c781572-848f-4f1a-9969-76f664a214a0>. It's always good to keep BMTA visible in the North Georgia region.

## Happy Holidays & New Year

I hope you all have enjoyed your holidays and are ready for a great new year. With a great leadership team and great members, I feel confident that 2016 will be a good one for the BMTA. **We can always use more help, so I encourage you to keep bringing your friends to BMTA hikes and work days, so they too can experience the fun on the trail!**

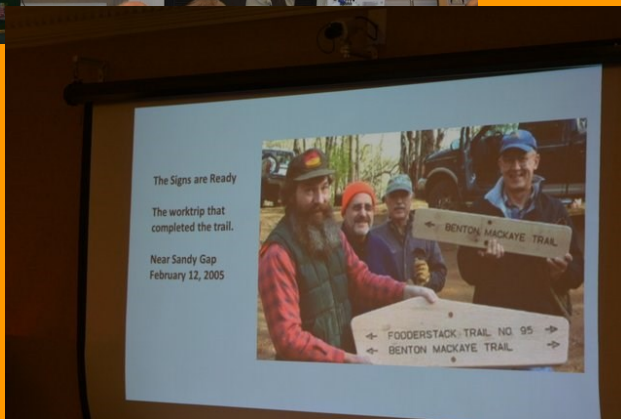


**Past and current BMTA presidents**

Not only do we have fun on the trail we celebrate and enjoy trying to figure out who these fine looking people are as they clean up for the annual banquet!! WOW! Where are those scruffy clothes and worn out hats?



**Ken Cissna with offerings from the BMTA store**



# Hike Up Blood Mountain

Photos and story by Mike Pilvinsky

On a cool morning in early December five BMTA members and eight first time BMTA hikers headed up the highest mountain on the Georgia section of the Appalachian Trail. There are several trail combinations leading up to the top of Blood Mountain, but this morning we chose the shortest and the most difficult route. Starting at the Byron Reece parking area we climbed for about a mile before turning south on the Appalachian Trail, where we continued uphill for another 1.5 miles. Along the way we stopped for some of the most magnificent views we have ever seen in North Georgia. The visibility was remarkable. From the southern cliffs we could easily see Lake Lanier and what we thought to be Stone Mountain and Atlanta. To the North we clearly saw Brasstown Bald.



From Left, Ken Cissna, Brian Bovard and Joe Kelly approach the summit of Blood Mountain



The mysterious balancing boulders on the AT between Blood Mountain and Neels Gap.

Once at the top, Clayton Webster talked about the history of the Blood Mountain Shelter and its renovation by the GATC. A possible "Trail Tree" was also identified by Mike Pilvinsky. Afterward the hikers had a lunch with million dollar views in the warm sun at one of the overlooks. After the challenging hike to the top, we relished the downhill walk and finished the hike in the Mountain Crossings parking lot at Neels Gap.

The hikers experienced a lot of AT lore that day. They climbed the highest mountain on the Georgia Section, They explored the stone shelter, built by the CCC in 1932, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. They saw a "Trail Tree." And they followed the Appalachian Trail through the only man made structure on the entire trail. Everyone agreed, with the help of the weather, it was one of the best hikes ever!



From the left. Joe Kelly, Kathleen Kelly, Tom Sewell, Ken Cissna, Everett Womack, Wilhelm Smith, Clayton Webster, Mike Pilvinsky, Brian Bovard, Clare and Ed Sullivan.

## Georgia Work Trip Report, December 2015

by Barry Allen

Saturday, December 12 was one of those rare late fall days in the Blue Ridge area with temperatures hitting almost 70 degrees by the time our work ended. The day started with dense fog, but by the time we congregated at Fall Branch at 9:00, the fog had lifted and was replaced with clear skies. Fourteen volunteers and three Forest Service employees joined us on this day. Three new volunteers, Cliff Munyan, Pete Sutherland and Chuck Haines, were thanks to recent outreach events from Marcia Lehman and Marge Heller. Two other guests, Cree Taylor and Brittany Raper, were brought by **Taylor Hamilton** to help for part of the day.



Taylor Hamilton is third from the right, behind the girl in blue

Work for the day was varied, as we labored to finish the many loose ends remaining on this reroute. We finally began the tie in to the trail just above the falls as Pete Sutherland and Bob Cowdrick began working on the ramp to the new trail. Phil and Debra Guhl, Bob Sloan, and Charlie Fehnel worked from the top end, digging some of the last of the trail to tie in to the ramp. Ralph Heller, Bob Ruby and Frank Forehand worked to excavate and assemble a public bench, while Taylor Hamilton, with help from Ken Cissna and Walt Cook, worked with the rest of the group to clean up the tread on the first 1/3 of the dig. All in all, our volunteers worked 91 hours with 32 hours of travel time – not including the Forest Service folks.

Now for the sad part. The following week, we learned of the death of Taylor Hamilton, USFS – the person responsible for marking out this new route. In all likelihood, this was the last project she visited. Now, after working on this reroute since last February, I feel a certain urgency to finish the project in her honor. With a good turnout in January, and a couple of interim trips to prep for January, we should be able to do it! Once our part is done, the Forest Service can then close the old path later in the month, and we can open the new route in conjunction with this closure. To make it happen, I need a great turnout in January – so **I am asking for your help**. Join us if you are able. Look for information on the website, and a reminder call later this month.

# JANUARY WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

By Barry Allen

**Fall Branch Falls is of particular importance to me with the recent passing of Taylor Hamilton, USFS. I would like to get this section of trail open – as our own remembrance of Taylor and all she has meant to BMTA. But I need your help, so join me if you are able.**

- ◆ **Where:** Fall Branch Falls, Stanley Creek Road parking area
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, January 9, 2015, 9:00 AM
- ◆ **Meet:** Big Mommas (across from the Pink Pig), Cherry Log – 8:15 AM for breakfast or 8:45 AM for ride Fall Branch Falls. Or meet us at 9:00 at Fall Branch Falls
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** to finish the re-rout. Many loose ends to tie up, including blazing, rock work, tread work, brush work.
- ◆ **What to bring:** minimum 2 liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384



## It's Time to Renew!!!!

If you are a life member or joined or renewed within the last couple of months, you can ignore this message. Your membership is current. **Thank you!!!**

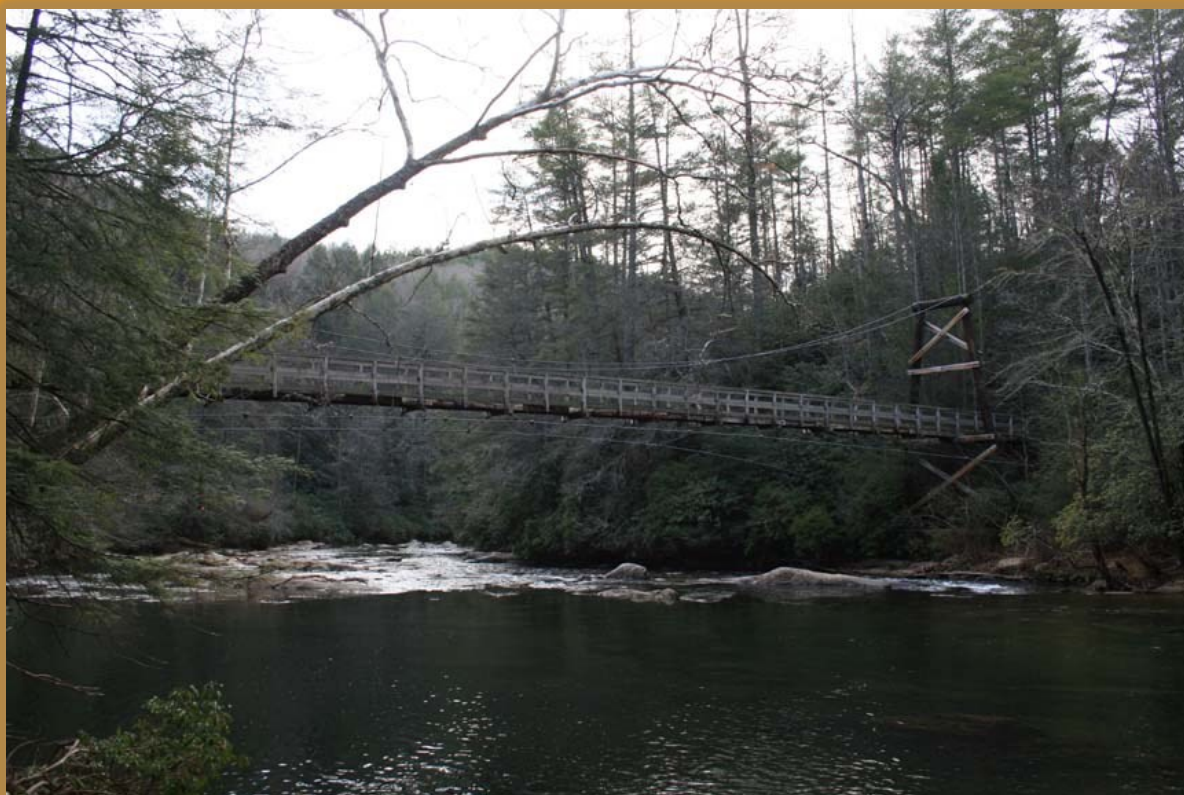
The rest of you: **It is time to renew.** As you know, memberships in BMTA are for an entire calendar year, so **everyone's membership ends on December 31.** You can pay via PayPal using your credit card or send a check to the BMTA. Either way, you start by clicking here: <http://www.bmta.org/Membership.php>

Your membership is tax deductible in just a few months if you pay between now and the end of the year. Also, please consider adding a tax deductible donation to BMTA before year end. As you know, BMTA has no paid staff, and all donations go to support the trail. Donations via check may be made using the printed membership form or via credit card or PayPal by clicking the Donate button on the bmta.org home page. **Thanks for your support!**

If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Ken Cissna, Membership Director, at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu).

Bob Ruby  
President, BMTA

Ken Cissna  
Membership Director and Store Manager, BMTA





## Towee Creek Reroute - BMT Section 13d Cherokee National Forest

by Ken Jones

Construction work has been progressing well for the Towee Creek reroute of the BMT / John Muir National Recreation Trail. We have completed the upper portion on the ridge, except for the final tie in, and are now working on the lower portion that is parallel to the Powerhouse Road and the Hiwassee River. This reroute has some beautiful views of the river. As we have been digging new tread, we have watched three different bald eagles catch fish and fly up and down the river. Since beginning work three weeks ago, we have constructed a total of approximately 2000' of new tread with 253 hours of volunteer labor.

People contributing to this effort so far are Ken Jones, Phyllis Jones, Tazz Reid, Clayton Pannell, Otis Pannell, Barry Allen, Rick Foster, Ronny Anderson, Bobby Mitchell, Steve Biatowas, Ed Sullivan, and Jim Mahoney. These people represent the BMTA and Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen. We also had two Forest Service Technicians, Travis Schwarzer and Drew McCarley, who have worked with us every day and provided guidance in this project. We have about 800 - 1000' of tread left to construct, and should finish this scenic portion of the BMT in January. **Thanks to all who are making this project go so rapidly and smoothly!**



# Potable Water

by Dick Hurd, MD

*Doctor Hurd is a Silver Service Award (25+ years) recipient from ATC and has hiked the Appalachian Trail. He wrote a series of articles on backcountry first aid for the GATC Mountaineer and has graciously given us permission to reprint it for BMTA. Look for installments in future newsletters. He reminds us that he has compiled information from a variety of public sources, seasoned with common sense from his years and miles of backpacking. He is not giving medical advice, and this guidance does not create a doctor/patient relationship.)*

On an overnight hike, finding water sources is of paramount importance, and will often determine where you camp at night. I plan to discuss the disease risks in water, and what we can do to make water safe for consumption. Information presented is derived from lectures and handouts at the Wilderness Medicine Society meeting this past summer. Around 1980, when I first became interested in long distance hiking, as long as water was clear, and came from a spring or a running stream, I would drink it "as is", boiling water only for cooking purposes. Then, articles began to appear about the risk of Giardia, and I changed my ways, either boiling or using Iodine tablets. Imagine my chagrin in 1999 when I developed a major Giardia infection after returning from a two week hike in New Hampshire and Maine. It was so sudden and so severe I am convinced I might not have made it if I were still on the Trail. That same year, passing through Andover, Maine, I learned that the town water supply was contaminated with Norwalk virus---something we tend to associate with cruise ships---and several hikers had become ill. As you will see, there are many things to be concerned about in the water we drink in the woods. Roland Meuser, in his classic 'Long Distance Hiking', did a meticulous survey of AT Thru-hikers in 1989. Water was always treated 14% of the time, never treated 18% of the time, and somewhere in between for the rest. Surprisingly, about the same percentage of hikers developed gastrointestinal illness in all categories, and he concluded that "it makes no difference how you purify your water or whether you treat it at all"! This conclusion was echoed at the WMS meeting when the speaker on this topic concluded the lecture with the question: "Does it really matter?" Read on and you be the judge, but I think it does.

## What are the hazards and risks in water?

**Chemicals and Pesticides:** This will be mainly from industrial discharge and agricultural surface water runoff, and is not a problem along the AT in Georgia, but further north it is. (Note: The BMT does have a problem with contaminated runoff from chicken farms in the Toccoa River and Little Skeenah Creek which cannot be remedied with field treatment. Use alternate sources.)

**Waterborne Pathogens:** Listed in decreasing size of the organism, these include:

**Parasites:** tapeworm and ascaris (water contaminated by sewage or pasture runoff)

**Protozoa:** Giardia (the most common cause of gastrointestinal illness) and Cryptosporidia

**Bacteria:** E. coli, Campylobacter, Salmonella

**Viruses:** Norwalk, Hepatitis A. This is only a partial listing of the more common organisms.

## How do we avoid them and provide safe potable water?

I don't have an answer for chemicals and pesticides except to know the area, and avoid water sources that are likely contaminated. In other words, good judgment. As to waterborne pathogens, we have several options:

**Boiling:** If you want to take no risks, this is the way to go, but it consumes time and fuel. The rule of thumb is to bring water to a rolling boil for one minute at or below 5000' elevation, and three minutes at or above 6500' elevation.

**Microfiltration:** This will remove suspended particulate and organic matter, but a heavy load may necessitate cleaning or replacing your filter. It is a good idea with heavily silted water to let it stand a while in a container before filtering. The filter pore size should be less than 1 micron, and it will get everything out of the water except viruses. Some filters include iodine in the resin, but the water passes through so quickly that it is questionable as to how much iodine is released, plus there is no way to know when the iodine in the filter is exhausted. Disadvantages include weight, possible malfunction, and clogged filters. Finally, if you are concerned about viruses (Norwalk!), you must still treat chemically.

**Chemical Disinfection:** The mainstays are Iodine and Chlorine. Without going into a lot of detail, Chlorine is unstable, is pH sensitive, and is affected by organic material, and so is not a good choice for hikers. My remarks will be confined to Iodine. There is some concern as to the effect of long term use of Iodine treated water on the thyroid gland. I consulted an Endocrinologist on this and was advised "not a problem". Nevertheless, it may be an issue if you have thyroid disease or are pregnant. Also some people are allergic to Iodine.

Iodine kills everything except Cryptosporidia, and the kill rate is proportional to the Iodine concentration, contact time, and water temperature, with a somewhat linear relationship. For example, the standard dose of Iodine is 8 ppm (parts per million); I am advised that this probably kills everything in 90 seconds, so 10 minutes is a sufficient wait **if** the water temperature is over 40 degrees. If the water temp is under 40, double the contact time (i.e. 20 minutes), or if you use a lower concentration to eliminate the taste, also double the contact time. For example, if you used 4 ppm, you would wait 20 minutes, but with cold water you would wait 40 minutes. Available products include:

**Iodine tablets:** 'Potable Aqua' is convenient in that one tablet in one liter of water produces 8 ppm. However, I have seen these tablets take a long time to dissolve, especially in cold water, and am unsure at what point the water becomes "safe". Also, once you open the bottle, exposing the tablets to oxygen, they start losing potency, so in a typical hiking situation, with frequent opening/closing the bottle, it is suggested that the tablets may not be effective after two weeks.

**Iodine Solution:** 'Polar Pure' is my choice. The iodine is already in solution so it goes to work immediately, but the rules about contact time and water temperature still apply. This will treat large quantities of water (2000 quarts), and is reliable as long as iodine crystals are visible in the bottom of the bottle. For those not familiar with this system, you refill the bottle with water with each use, and the water becomes saturated with iodine for the next use. One disadvantage is the potential of a bottle filled with liquid to freeze, but I have never encountered this problem.

### Summary

I have reviewed the problems and potential solutions for dealing with water in the outdoors. Because filters don't get viruses, and Iodine doesn't get Cryptosporidia, you must combine both if you wish to be as safe as possible. Boiling remains the gold standard. Good luck and stay well.

*Postscript by Bob Ruby: Dr. Hurd's article was written before the availability of the SteriPen. BMTA's Dr. Richard Harris advises that he considers SteriPen technology to be the best currently available since properly used it treats all these contaminants except chemical runoff, including viruses. But since it is battery-dependent, one should also carry alternate treatments as a backup.*

# 2016 HIKING PLAN

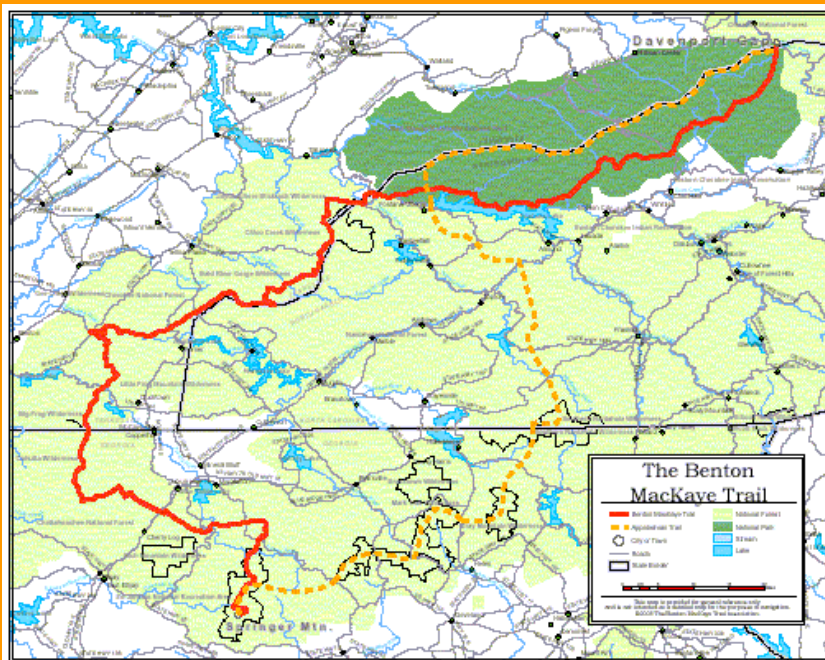
By Mike Pilvinsky Hiking Director

In 2016 you can expect to see at least one easy and one moderate hike each month. There will also be several backpacking trips, generally just weekend trips, including one in March for beginners and families with children. The hikes will touch Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Many will include BMT sections. The hikes will traverse the BMT, AT and many other trails as well. Hiking will not be limited to weekends but will be scheduled on a day and time which is most convenient to the hike leader. However, scheduling hikes on regular trail maintenance days will be avoided.

We will try to keep the hikes posted on the activity page of the BMTA web site for at least 3-4 months in advance to give the weekenders adequate time to plan their next visit to paradise. Currently, hikes are posted thru June 2016.

Hike Leaders are still needed for an easy hike in March and both hikes in July, August, October, and December. Think about your favorite hike and sign up to lead others down that trail during one of those months. To all the trail maintainers out there, why not lead a hike on your section of the trail? **It would be a great way to show off your work while you explain the intricacies of your trail that only someone who has spent hours at work would see!** Contact mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com and get your hike on the activity page. If you are unsure about your ability to lead a hike, please contact me and we will talk about it and I will provide you with all the resources and help you need. Then, we'll go out and practice leading a hike on a trail that you select.

**Something to think about: Would you be up for fall backpacking trip thru the 101 miles of the AT in the Shenandoah National Park?**



**Finally, don't forget the Hike Inn trip in February.** If you are having any trouble making reservations try emailing [reservations@hike-inn.com](mailto:reservations@hike-inn.com) Then leave your phone and the best time to call and they will make every effort to call you back. You cannot register on line since we booked the entire lodge and all rooms will show as already full. If you are ready to quit trying to reserve a room, please contact me and I will try to get thru the red tape for you. The Hike Inn is always a great experience and hard to beat at the discounted price offered to BMTA.

## Upcoming Hikes

By Mike Pilvinsky Hiking Director

### ♦ January 14 Turtletown Falls (TN)

Easy 3.7 mile loop with two beautiful falls; short uphill on the return leg. Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna AT usf.edu)

### ♦ January 18 BMT/AT Upper Loop at Springer Mountain (GA)

Moderate 4.5 miles. Contact hike leaders Travis or Shirley Crouch at [travis AT hikenorthgeorgia.com](mailto:travis AT hikenorthgeorgia.com) or stop by North Georgia Mountain Outfitters just north of Ellijay on Highway 515.

### Len Foote Hike Inn Reserved for February 24

The Len Foote Hike Inn has been reserved exclusively for BMTA members at one half the normal room rate Wednesday, February 24, 2016. Only twenty rooms are available so make your reservations early. Just call [1-800-501-8032](tel:1-800-501-8032). Your rate of \$85.00 + tax includes a room for two, dinner and breakfast. This annual BMTA trip is always one of the most enjoyable events of the season. The moon will just be two days from full so we may have one of those special evening views as well as the famous Hike Inn sunrise. For more information go to [hike-inn.com](http://hike-inn.com)

**\* Note some of these hikes are considerable driving distances.  
Please contribute gas money to your driver when you carpool. Thank You!**

## Trail Alerts & Updates

### Swinging Bridge Road Closures

The USFS is conducting closures of Forest Service Road 816 off Hwy 60 that leads to the popular swinging bridge over the Toccoa River. The closing are part of a logging operation in the area. For more information, contact the Chattahoochee National Forest in Blue Ridge 706 -745-6928. Although the road is being closed, the bridge and trails remain open.

### Parking Solution for Highway 515/US76 Crossing Location

Hikers on the section of the BMT that crosses Highway 515/US 76 between Ellijay and Blue Ridge, no longer have to park next to the highway or along County Road 158 on the east side of the highway. Julie Jabaley, Executive Director of the Craddock Center, has given permission for hikers to use the parking lot next to the Center, which is located on the hill just west of the highway. Look for the Craddock Center sign and take the road up the hill. The trail passes just behind the Center. Backpackers may also park their cars overnight. The facility is open weekdays for hikers to use the restrooms or to get a fresh supply of water.

**The deadline for articles for the January Newsletter is Wednesday January 27, 2016  
Thanks for your support!!!!**