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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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President's Column December 2016 by Tom Keene

Odds and Ends to End the Year

The BMTA Electronic Media Survey – Please fill one out. Click [HERE](#).
(Thanks!)

- ◆ **Forest Fires and Trail Closures** – The spate of forest fires during November in the BMT's three national forests led to a lot of questions about trail closure. The BMTA website's "Contact" link on the home page was busy. Our crack mail team is delighted to hear from folks using the trail, but the reality is, the best place to get closure information is almost always the "Alerts and Notices" page of our three partner national forests. There is a link to all three pages on our website's Activities page. I've copied the links below. Try a couple of them, right **NOW!** Any time you are planning a major hike on the BMT or elsewhere in these forests, it's a good idea to check the relevant "**Alerts and Notices**" page before you head out. These pages are also a great way to keep in touch with what's going on in the three forests generally. Again, the three links are always in plain view near the top of our [Activities page](#).

- ◆ **US Forest Service Alerts and Notices**

[Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest Alerts and Notices](#)

[Cherokee National Forest Alerts and Notices](#)

[National Forests in North Carolina Alerts and Notices](#)

<https://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/conditions.htm>

District's or Smokies Backcountry info can be called for updated info and other questions.

- ◆ **Winter Hikes** – A Testimonial: Winter is, hands down, my favorite time to hike in the Southern Appalachians. The views are fantastic with those pesky leaves gone, the cold keeps the riff-raff away, and if you layer up competently the chilly temperatures are very energizing. So get out there. Just check the relevant Alerts and Notices page before you go.
- ◆ **Winter Work Trips** – OK, it's tough to roll out of bed before first light on a Saturday when the temperature is in the twenties. And you will probably be cold during the trailhead safety briefing. But as soon as you start hiking in to the work site – to say nothing of actually working – you will begin pulling those layers off, and feeling a little virtuous as well. It's great. That said, the key to a really fine winter work trip is finding a quality lunch spot, if possible a place in the full sun and out of the wind. Check out the group below from one of the recent GA workdays near the Fall Branch. The morning temperature was right at 20 degrees. By lunch these folks were positively basking. Join us when you can....



- ◆ **Now is the Time (aka The Maintainers Corner)** – Winter is also a great time to get out and enjoy your own maintenance section. Don't plan on any heavy work; enjoy a day in the woods. Do something like refresh blazes. While you are at it, you can toss fallen branches and small blowdowns off the trail. If you see any major blowdowns you jot down the location and later email your Maintenance Director (Ken Jones, TN/NC or Barry Allen, GA). They have a list of certified BMTA sawyers just sitting around waiting for work.

Keep well, everybody!

Happy Holidays!

2017 - Membership Renewal Time

by Ralph Heller – Membership Director

It's that time of year. Taxes, a new calendar, and new resolutions are made and hopefully kept. If you have not already renewed your membership in the BMTA, please resolve to do it this month.

Memberships are for the calendar years starting in January, so everyone's membership ends in December if not renewed. If you renewed within the past couple of months, your membership is current, and you can ignore this message. Thank you!! If you are not sure of your status, contact me (rshbmta At Gmail.com).

Remember, both your membership payment and any donations are tax deductible. Many thanks for your past and continued support!! If there is anything you can suggest for improving our organization or make your membership a better experience, please let us know. See you on the trail.



“...leaving a footpath for generations to follow”

Final Reminder

by George Owen

Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC) Winter Hike Week Pigeon Forge, TN January 18-22, Music Road Inn

Come for daily hikes at lower, warmer parts of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Rates at the Music Road Inn and Hotel are very low - \$64 low and \$84 high.

25 hikes to choose from over four days, most little or none affected by the fires

Hike Registration is only \$25 per person for well-guided hikes at various ratings.

- **To register** go to <http://www.southeasternfoottrails.org> and click on "Winter Hiking Event," upper right, for all event details.
- **All hikes are listed on the third page.** Sign up on arrival for them.
- **See notice about optional Leadership Conference** on Saturday.

For any questions on this event, contact BMTAers Darcy Douglas, Rick Harris, or George Owen.



Hemlock Treatment on BMT

by Ralph Heller

In November, members of the BMTA assisted Save Georgia's Hemlocks and concerned residents of Laurel Ridge in treating badly infested hemlock trees along Laurel Ridge Road in the area just east of Highway 515. The BMT shares the road in the section treated. The hemlock trees, some of which were very large, required special treatment due to their size and advanced infestation.

Two hundred forty-four trees were treated. Special thanks to Save Georgia's Hemlocks (SGH) and their Chairman, Donna Shearer, for assisting in this project. Also, we thank Derrick Morris, a concerned Laurel Ridge Community property owner and SGH member for organizing and directing the project. BMTA members participating were Ralph Heller, Jeff DePaola, Kathy Williams, Larry Brannon and Jean Haberbush.



During training with Donna and Derrick, volunteers learned what an injector was and how to measure each hemlock's diameter to determine correct dosage. Teams of five were formed with each team member in charge of a specific task-measuring, injecting, recording, mixing and marking.



By the end of the day everyone had mastered injecting.



It was vital to use filters when refilling each injector.



Marking each hemlock to enable follow-up in years to come.



Hey down there! Laurel Creek terrain was challenging!!!



Phew! Surely one of my legs is now shorter than the other!



BMT on Laurel Creek

Hello hemlock friends.

Before any more time passes, I wanted to take a moment to let you know how much I appreciate your wonderful work to treat the hemlocks at Laurel Ridge on November 19. It was a lovely day to be in the woods with a great group of enthusiastic volunteers.

To summarize, 26 volunteers treated 244 trees with Imidacloprid, the long-lasting chemical that will give them five years of protection from the hemlock woolly adelgid, and also gave 31 of the largest and sickest ones an emergency treatment with Safari, the fast-acting rescue product. Many of these trees would not have survived much longer without your efforts to save them.

So a big **THANK YOU** from me, from Derrick Morris who organized and managed the whole project, and especially from the trees themselves. You've done a really good thing, and I'm sure everyone who travels along Laurel Ridge, whether hiking or driving, will appreciate the results for years to come.

Wishing you all a blessed holiday season and looking forward to seeing you again next year.

Best regards, Donna Shearer
Chairman, Save Georgia's Hemlocks
[706-429-8010](tel:706-429-8010)

www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org

December Work Trip Report-Fall Branch Falls

by Barry Allen

For almost two years, the Fall Branch Falls reroute has offered a unique set of challenges for our trail community. And the most difficult of these challenges has been the final 50 yards of new trail as the route ties into the existing trail at the Falls. Normally, a short switchback and a ramp to the existing trail would be a relatively easy dig, taking a day or two of labor. But that just wouldn't do for this section of trail.

Most folks using this short section of trail are not hikers, but rather they are sight-seers out for a couple of hours to view the beauty of the mountains. They are grandparents with young grand-children. They are retirees with knee and hip replacements. They are young adults who could use a bit more exercise and a bit less table fare. They are vacationing parents with small children and pets staying in Cherry Log, Blue Ridge or Ellijay trying to enjoy an all too short vacation. In other words, this new trail had to be put together with the needs of a larger public in mind.

My concern on the final transition to the existing trail had been the steepness of the route and the concern for the public in wet and icy weather. After an initial dig, I was still concerned that the stone steps we initially used just weren't quite enough in slippery conditions. We needed to install well-defined steps using timbers that could be better engineered to handle the slope. And this made for a lot more work and work that would need to be done over a several day period.

I put out a call for volunteers on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, the 8th, 9th and 10th of December. The resulting help was nothing short of incredible! I initially hoped for three or four people each day, knowing the work would be slower, more tedious labor, on a steep slope where only a couple of people could work close together. Instead of three or four people, I had twice that number available each day. And while we could not use more than a couple of people at any one time on the steps, there were other tasks that needed to be done. **Over a three-day period, we hauled 2700 pounds of gravel to the work site, built a large bump wall anchored with a 1500 pound boulder, moved several large timbers to the work site, improved the side trail to the Falls, and installed 16 steps on the ramp.**

And while we are not quite finished with the steps, the heavy lifting is out of the way. My thanks goes out to Mark Yost who helped all three days, cutting and shaping timbers. Thanks to Darcy Douglas who managed to get quite a bit of public help carrying buckets of gravel one-quarter mile from my truck to the work site. And to Mike Kovitch who contributed some much-needed tool resources (and who swings a mean sledge!)

Continued next page





Thanks to new members Jim Roe, Dave Ricker, and Seth Stanley who are very capable and welcome new additions to our monthly work group. These three men never batted an eye when asked to work with sledge, pick-ax and rock bar while helping to remove rock and shape steps.

Thanks also to members Jeff DePaola and friend Josh Walker for spending a good portion of Saturday morning struggling with a 1500 pound boulder to anchor a new bump wall routing traffic around a heavily eroded section of trail at the falls. And as always, thanks to Tom Keene, Doug Kleiber, Phil Guhl, Debra Guhl, Ken Cissna, Bob Cowdrick and Ralph Heller for their irreplaceable help and willingness to do whatever is needed.

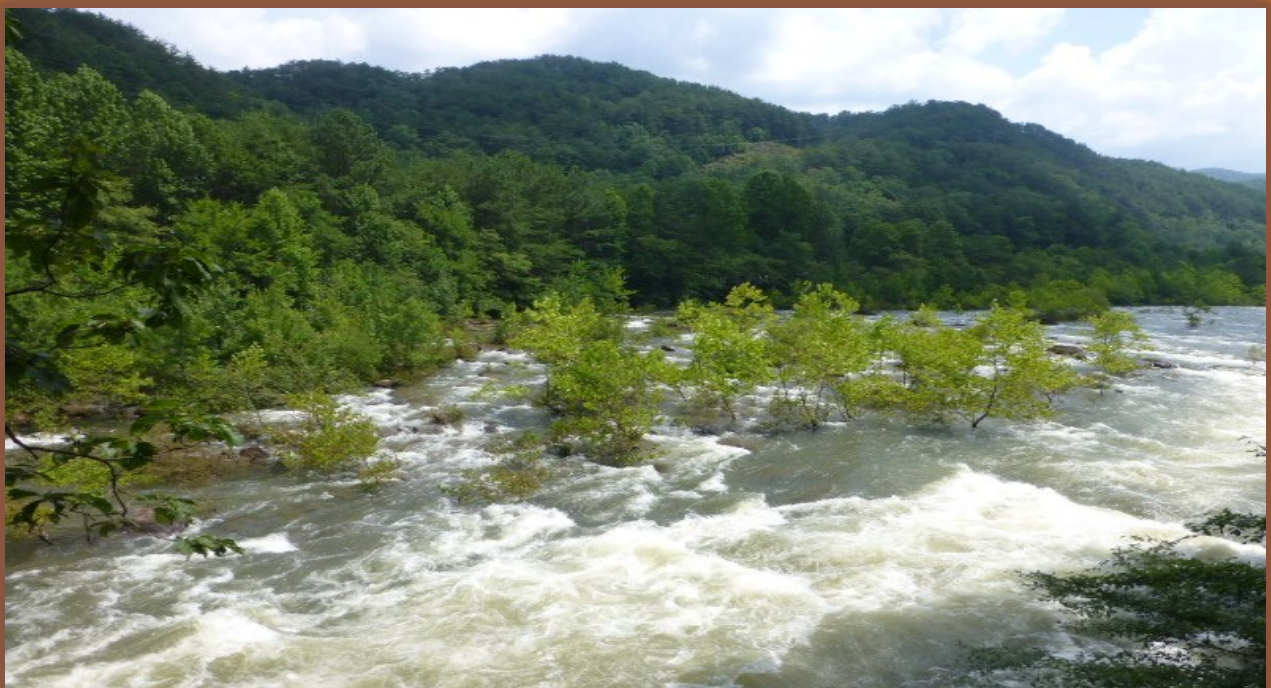
JANUARY WORK TRIP-Section 11e

by Barry Allen

- **Where:** Section 11e
- **When:** Saturday, January 14, 2016, 9:00 AM
- **Meet:** Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00 AM or Thunder Rock Campground, Hwy 64 at 9:00AM.
- **Plan for the Day:** Tread work; cross tie stabilization work.
- **What to bring:** Minimum two 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.

Please join us for our January trip as we return to work Section 11e near Thunder Rock Campground in Tennessee. This section of trail needs grade and drainage work on existing cross tie steps on the ascent from the Ocoee River. It also needs tread work on several areas of trail between the campground and the power-line crossing.

We will be working with Pulaski and trail hoe on tread work and sledge hammer and Pulaski on step replacement.



Upcoming Hikes

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules a minimum of two hikes per month, one of five to eight miles and moderate difficulty and one that is shorter and easier. In addition, we have occasional backpacking hikes, hikes that are dog friendly, and more difficult ones that might be called "hardy hikes." Occasionally we co-sponsor hikes with other organizations. Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. More will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website for updates.

January 7 (Saturday) Byron Reece to Blood Mountain

Hike to the highest point on the Georgia Appalachian Trail. From the Byron Reece Trail parking lot to the AT, then south to the top of Blood Mountain and return. About five moderately strenuous miles, including over two miles of uphill climbing.

Contact hike leader Mike Pilvinsky [mikepilvinsky AT hotmail.com](mailto:mikepilvinsky@att.net).

January 9 (Monday) BMT to John Muir Trail along the Hiwassee River

We will enter the BMT on Hwy 68 north of Farner, TN and hike the BMT 3.7 miles to the intersection of the John Muir Trail (has a few "blow downs") then head back along the Hiwassee (five miles with some rocky footing and boulders along the river) to Hwy 68. Involves 2.5 mile shuttle on Hwy 68. Total hiking 8.7 miles.

Contact hike leader Tom Sewell at [SewellTom AT yahoo.com](mailto:SewellTom@yahoo.com).

January 15 (Sunday) After the Fire: East Cowpen and Rough Ridge Trails

Are you, like me, curious to see the impact of the recent Rough Ridge wildfire? Join me for this special five-mile, moderate terrain, out-and-back inspection hike on the East Cowpen and Rough Ridge Trails. They are located in the southern part of the Cohutta Wilderness Area so our hiker limit is 12. The Forest Service reports only moderate fire impact on these trails. Winter views should be great.

Contact hike leader Bob Ruby at [bmtabob AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabob@gmail.com).

January 25 (Wednesday) Brush Creek Trail

The Brush Creek Trail provides an easy/leisure hike of seven miles that begins at Boyd Gap overlooking the upper Ocoee River put-in and descends through pine forest and even passes some low-grade coal deposits. After two miles, the trail turns east and continues on the west side of Upper Ocoee Lake, with some great views of the lake. We might even have a rare sighting of the giant woodpecker that is reported to live in the area.

Contact hike leader Hank Baudet at 706-946-4318 or [geezer95 AT gmail.com](mailto:geezer95@gmail.com).

February 4 Wagon Train Trail Hike - Brasstown Bald to Young Harris

After a short climb from the Brasstown Bald Visitor's Center, it's all downhill to Young Harris. We'll take our time for close looks at anything of interest including the spectacular ice formations on the trailside cliffs (if temperatures cooperate), wonderful views of the Young Harris valley, and the beautiful high elevation yellow birches. Hike is seven miles; normally easy but moderate if the trail is icy and slippery. Well-behaved trail dogs are welcome. As part of this hike is in wilderness, limit is 12. Co-sponsored with Georgia Forest Watch; hike leaders are Sue Harmon of GFW and Ken Cissna of BMTA.

To reserve your spot, please email the GFW office at info AT gafw.org or call 706-867-0051. For further information, contact either Sue Harmon at suepharmon AT gmail.com or 770-540-3672 or Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

February 7 (Tuesday, 6:30pm) Beginning backpacking class

Travis Crouch, AT and BMT section hiker and owner of North Georgia Mountain Outfitters, will conduct a class for beginning backpackers and for anyone who would like a chance to benefit from his considerable experience. He will discuss backpacking techniques, equipment options, and strategies for a safe and enjoyable hiking. In March and April, BMTA will conduct beginning overnight hikes for the "graduates" of the class.

For further information or to register for the class, contact Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741 or Travis Crouch at travis AT hikenorthgeorgia.com or 706-698-4453.

The class will be conducted at North Georgia Mountain Outfitters, 14244 Hwy 515 N, Suite 1200 Ellijay, GA 30536; 706-698-HIKE(4453), approximately three miles north of Ellijay on highway 515. See <http://www.hikenorthgeorgia.com>.

February 10 (Friday) BMT Section 14 – TN 68 to Unicoi Gap via Buck Bald

5.6 miles; moderate to strenuous; approximately 4 hrs. on the trail. The first 45 min. is uphill, but your effort will be rewarded with lots of good views, history, and culture. Lunch will be at the Buck Bald picnic area, where you'll have a 360 degree view of the surrounding mountains. Unicoi Gap is near the TN/NC state line and is a site on the historic Unicoi Turnpike National Historic Trail. You'll have a chance to learn more about the Unicoi Turnpike during the hike—it only sounds like it is part of the highway system. Shuttle is involved; the Coker Creek Visitors Center is on the shuttle route.

Contact hike leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan at clare7982 AT gmail.com.

February 23-24 (Thursday–Friday) Amicalola Falls to Len Foote Hike Inn

Once again BMTA members will be able to enjoy the Len Foote Hike Inn—at half price rates! Five miles, moderate difficulty. This is for BMTA members. For reservations, contact the Hiking Director for the BMTA code. Then, go to <http://hike-inn.com/rates-and-reservations/>. Cost (including tax) is \$70.15 for one person in a room, \$100.63 for two. Includes their superb dinner and breakfast. For information about the Len Foote Hike Inn, go to <http://hike-inn.com/>. Space is limited.

For further information, contact the Hiking Director, Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

March 4 (Friday) Etowa River Trails near Boling Park in Canton

Here is a hidden gem convenient to our Atlanta hikers. Behind Boling Park in Canton, Georgia with two hilly loops and an easy return along the Etowah River are 7.6 miles with 1139 feet total elevation change. We will snack at the "Haunted Church" and visit the "Satanic baptismal."

Contact hike leader Howard Baggett at [howardeb AT windstream.net](mailto:howardeb@windstream.net).

If you are interested in leading a hike or even just have a hike you'd like to see us offer with someone else leading, please contact me at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) or 706-636-1741.



**Deadline for the January Newsletter is Wednesday January 25, 2017
Happy New Year !!!**