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BMTA Officers 2015-2016

President:	Bob Ruby
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Secretary:	Joy Forehand
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GA M/C:	Barry Allen
TN/NC M/C:	Ken Jones
Smokies Coord:	Dick Evans
Hiking Director:	Mike Pilvinsky
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Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
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BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association



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President's Column September 2016 by Bob Ruby

Great Fall Hiking in Store

This morning as I was finalizing my column I was reminded that this is the first day of fall. We can look forward to cooler hiking and work days. The drought may continue for a while. This weekend I am backpacking on the BMT across the Joyce Kilmer - Slickrock Wilderness and heard that some of the high ridge water sources are dry or running at a trickle. Still there are enough reliable sources to proceed with planning.

Help Still Needed for October Festivals

We **urgently** need volunteers to help staff shifts in the BMTA booth at the **Arts in the Park, Oct 8-9 in Blue Ridge**, and the **Apple Festival, Oct.15-16 in Ellijay**. If you can help, please contact Marcia Lehman, Co- Chair of Publicity, mlehman10 AT yahoo DOT com before October first.

Annual Meeting Registration – November 5

You can now sign up to attend the Annual Meeting and order your meal at <http://www.bmta.org/AnnualMeeting-2016.php>.

BMTA Volunteer of the Year (New Recognition Award)

Because not everyone who works in support of the BMT is a trail maintainer, the Board wants to establish a new recognition category to be awarded at the Annual Meeting. This new annual award will tentatively be called the BMTA Volunteer of the Year and will recognize outstanding service in roles other than trail maintenance. Some possible activities could be leading hikes, administrative service, event leadership, coordination with other trail clubs/agencies, conservation and possibly fundraising. With so many members giving generously of their efforts, time and skills, this may be a hard award to choose. We assume it will be given each year, like the Maintainer of the Year award. It will be considered to be on a par with the Maintainer of the Year award. Both are generally less prestigious than the BMTA Outstanding Service award which is given occasionally to recognize truly outstanding contributions, usually over a number of years. **If you have any suggestions on the name or criteria for this award, please submit your thoughts in the next week or so to Tom Keene (tkbmta at gmail dot com).**

Reminder – Turn in Your Trail Maintenance Hours

It's time to make sure your maintenance hours for the past year have been recorded. Please record and submit your independent trail maintenance hours and travel time for the 10/1/2015-9/30/2016 fiscal year, and send them to the appropriate BMTA Maintenance Directors and/or Ralph Heller by early in October. (Official group workday hours from the data sign-in sheets have already been collected and submitted by the trip leaders).

Everyone who has recorded a total of thirty hours will receive a spiffy BMTA Trail Maintainer shirt. This is BMTA's way of saying thank you for your contribution to this fundamental function of the BMTA. If you attend the annual meeting, you will receive it there and be included in the annual group photo.



2015 “Spiffy” Maintainers with their “Spiffy” shirts!!! What a crew!!!

Ever wonder what benefit BMTA derives from reporting volunteer hours to the Forest Service and National Park Service? The hours translate into dollars! Volunteer work is valued at \$23.56 per hour. When you multiply this by BMTA volunteer hours, the totals are significant! BMTA's volunteer work is recognized by the Forest Service and NPS. The Agencies use the totals to help demonstrate the value that the public puts on their trail resources and services. This in turn helps them justify and compete for staff and funding.

Every Kid in the Outdoors

The Obama Administration has just launched the second year of the Every Kid in a Park program. This program provides every fourth grader in America with a one-year pass so they and their families can visit federal lands for free for a full year - this includes National Parks, National Forests and more! The intent of this program is to help connect children with nature and public lands as someday these places will be theirs to protect and care for.

If you know a fourth grader or someone who has one in their family, ensure they visit the Every Kid in a Park website to get their pass.

Bills in Congress to Keep an Eye On - Update

Here is an update on two bills recently introduced in Congress that would, if passed, impact the future of our forests:

- ◆ The *Human-Powered Travel in Wilderness Areas Act (S.3205)* was introduced by Senators Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). The legislation would allow bikers to join hikers and horseback riders in those scenic, undisturbed areas. The bill would require “local officials” of the USFS, NPS, BLM and FWS to designate within two years all wilderness trails not be opened to bicycles, otherwise they would default to bicycles being allowed. According to [govtrack.us](#), as of September 19, 2016, this bill is estimated to have a **14% chance of passage**.
- ◆ The *State National Forest Management Act of 2015 (H.R.3650)* was introduced by Rep. Don Young (R-AK). This bill would direct the Forest Service, to convey to any state up to two million acres of the National Forest System (NFS) that the state elects to acquire through enactment of a state bill meeting certain criteria. States would pay or swap lands to the Forest Service for the Fair Market Value of the land transferred. The portions of the NFS conveyed to states would be “administered and managed primarily for timber production.” According to [govtrack.us](#), as of September 19, 2016, this bill is estimated to have a **21% chance of passage**.



2016 Benton MacKaye Trail Association Annual Meeting

**Historic Tapoco Lodge, Robbinsville, NC.
November 4-6, 2016**

COMPLETE MEETING SCHEDULE

Wait! Have you registered, paid for the Saturday evening banquet, and indicated your menu preference? If not click [HERE](#).

Friday – November 4th

- 2:00 PM – Hospitality Table in Lobby of Tapoco Lodge Opens-Facility and trail maps are available
- 3:00 PM – Hike #1 Carpool to Old Field Gap Road and hike Bearpen Gap Section of the BMT: 1.8 miles, mostly downhill, rated easy. Great views of the Hangover Ridge. One of the most scenic sections of the entire trail. Trip Leader – Dick Evans. Return to Tapoco Lodge around 5:00 PM
- 4:00 PM – Lodge Check-In Opens
- 6:00 PM – Supper on your own or in groups at the Tapoco Riverside Grill.
- 7:30 PM – Free Popcorn and Movie (“A Walk in the Woods”) in the Tin Can Theatre

Saturday – November 5th

- 7:30 AM – Breakfast starts in the Lodge Lobby. (Coffee free; Continental Breakfast -\$9.95 until 10:30.)

FYI: Trail lunches (\$15) includes wrap, fruit, cookie & drink. Arrange at Front Desk.

- 8:30 AM – Hike #2 Carpool to Big Fat Gap and hike to the Hangover, a spectacular viewpoint just off the BMT: 7 mile round trip, 2,000 foot elevation gain, STRENUOUS Trip. Return to Lodge about 3:30 PM. Hike Leader – Dick Evans

- 8:30 AM – Hike #3 Carpool to Fontana Village and hike the Yellow Creek Mountain Section of the BMT to Old Field Gap Road: 7.5 miles, steep section at the beginning. Rated Moderate+ with great views from a wooded ridge walk. Return to Lodge about 4:00 PM. Trip Leaders – Keith Mertz and Ellie Douty

- 9:00 AM – Trip #1 Carpool to visit Yellow Creek Falls (3/8 mile, easy hike), visit Wehrloom Honey in Robbinsville. Lunch in the Hub Restaurant in Robbinsville. Travel to Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and hike the Memorial Forest Trail: 1.2 – 2 mile. Rated Easy+. See the fabled “Big Trees” in the first permanently protected wilderness in the world. Visit Maple Springs Observation Point. Return to Lodge about 4:00 PM. Trip Leaders–Kim Hainge and George Owen

4:30 PM BMTA Board of Directors meeting: Location TBA**5:00 BMTA Annual Meeting: Banquet Room off the Lodge Lobby**

5:00 PM– Business Meeting, including elections of 2017 Officers

5:45 PM – Break for Dinner Setup. Shop/Socialize in the Lobby or Riverside Patio

6:15 PM – Buffet Dinner in the Banquet Room.

7:15 PM – Featured Speaker-Marshall McClung, local historian, will talk about early development in the Graham County area.

7:45 PM – Annual BMTA Awards Ceremony.

Sunday – November 6th (Remember to set your clock back)

7:30 AM – Breakfast starts in the Lodge Lobby. (Coffee free; Continental Breakfast -\$9.95 until 10:30.)

FYI: Trail lunches (\$15) includes wrap, fruit, cookie & drink. Arrange at Front Desk.

8:30 AM – Hike #4 Carpool to Big Fat Gap and hike the BMT into the Slickrock Wilderness, thru Nichols Cove and over Yellow Hammer Gap to return to the Lodge. 5.8 miles, rated Moderate. Return to Lodge about 2:00 PM. Trip Leader – Dick Evans

8:30 AM – Hike #5 Drive on your own to the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and explore on your way home. We'll provide maps.

8:30 AM – Trip #2 Drive to Fontana Dam and see the highest dam east of the Mississippi (on your own). We'll provide maps.

9:00 AM – Hike #6 Hike the Bear Creek Falls Trail, about 2 miles, rated Moderate. See a small waterfall on the scenic Cheoah River. Trip Leader – Kim Hainge

9:00 AM – Hike #7 Hike the Tapoco Trail/BMT to Yellow Hammer Gap, then the historic Belding Trail and finally the Bear Creek Falls Trail. 8 Miles, rated Moderate +. Trip Leader – Pending

11:00 AM – End of Lodge Checkout



TN/NC Monthly Work Trip

August 27, 2016

by Ken Jones

We had a very productive work trip on BMT Section 12a, the Dry Pond Lead Trail. This trail got its name for an obvious reason. The trail is routed through Little Frog Wilderness along a ridge top, or lead. Near the top of the mountain is a naturally occurring depression that is normally dry. Only once in the wettest of conditions in the winter have I ever seen water in this dry pond. Six trail workers continued the work that we started in June on another hot and humid summer day. We began brushing out the trail with sling blades near the Wilderness boundary about one mile up the trail from US 64. A crosscut crew consisting of Rick Harris and his wife, Brenda, started work from the top of the section and worked their way down to meet us. This was Brenda's first experience with the crosscut saw, and Rick believes in giving new workers a challenge. Brenda's challenge came in the form of a 24" diameter oak tree across the trail.



Brenda observes a moment of meditation –Ahhhh



Hmm. Wife handles Very Sharp Object with ease

We were glad to welcome another first time worker for our monthly work trips, Alan McClure. Alan has agreed to take on this section of the BMT, and we are certainly glad to have him with us. With all of the good help we were able to brush out another mile of the trail, and log out all of the blow downs except for two very large trees within the first mile of the trail coming in from US 64. We have now brushed out about half of the section this summer.

Thank you to the following volunteers who worked hard in some very hot conditions: Barry Allen, Allen Peebles, Alan McClure, Rick Harris, Brenda Harris, and Ken Jones. It was great to have the acting District Trails Technician, Drew McCarley, join us in the afternoon on this work trip and give Brenda some well-deserved relief on the crosscut saw!

BMTA Wilderness First Responders

By Phil Guhl

On April 15th of this year, a tragedy happened on the Benton MacKaye Trail. A group of volunteers from AT&T had come out for the day to participate in trail maintenance. For several of them, this was their first trip.

One of those volunteers collapsed when the crew broke for lunch. Despite the efforts of everyone present, the man did not recover. Folks gave rescue breaths, chest compressions; some were on the cellphone with 911, as well as runners who went down the trail to assist Emergency Service personnel. It was a team effort!

Two people who participated in these efforts were Debra and Phil Guhl; members of the BMTA who join many of the Georgia monthly work trips. After the emotional dips and valleys associated with dealing with this trauma, they decided to do something productive as a result of this experience and pursue a Wilderness First Responder certification.

In July, Debra and Phil Guhl attended WFR (pronounced 'woofer') certification training at the Nantahala Outdoor Center in Bryson City, North Carolina. The training and curriculum are offered by the founding organization of the national WFR program: Stonehearth Open Learning Opportunities (SOLO). The training spans nine full days and a good piece of one night. While many in-depth medical topics are covered, there is an emphasis on crisis decision-making and leadership in an emergency situation in the wilderness. 'Wilderness' is defined as any setting where the patient is more than one hour from definitive care, i.e., usually a hospital. WFR certification uses classroom time and intense simulated scenarios in the field. This is all concluded with a written and practical examination...of which, Debra and Phil passed!





Trail maintenance can be physically challenging. Injuries can also be caused from the myriad of tools used on the maintenance trips. The Guhls believe that this training would not have saved the individual in April, other than being more alert for any possible symptoms, but this training can help the majority of injuries that may be experienced. They do feel having WFRs available is an asset to the BMTA, plus they are better poised to help others they may cross paths with on the trail who are in distress.



September Work Trip

by Barry Allen

September's plan was for a work trip on Section 9, a pretty little section of mixed use trail following the course of the South Fork of the Jacks River for a two mile portion of the hike. 'Mixed use' means the Forest Service has designated a trail as suitable for more than one group of users, and in this case, horsemen and bikers share the section of trail along the South Fork with hikers. Much of the trail along the South Fork is old road bed -- wide and not too difficult. But there are extensive water diversions on this section, needing frequent cleaning. Much of the trail along the river drains poorly, and as silt accumulates, the trail can become extremely muddy in periods of wet weather. Frequent diversion cleanout helps minimize the mud, making this section much more pleasant to hike.

Our work team gathered in Blue Ridge on Saturday morning, September 10th to share rides into Watson Gap. From Watson, we loaded into a few vehicles, dropping two trucks at Pate Gap and taking the remaining vehicles on to the cemetery at Dyer Gap. From Dyer, Darcy Douglas and Gilbert Treadwell formed one team to clear trees from the trail on the hike from Dyer Gap to the South Fork. Darcy and Gilbert opted for the convenience of a crosscut saw and ax, rather than the burden of carrying a chain saw, fuel and oil all day. And I must say, it worked out well, and was much quieter!



Gilbert Treadwell, Doug Kleiber, Jerry Lott, Jeff DePaola, Darcy Douglas, Ralph Heller, Barry Allen, Stacey Somppi, Ken Cissna, Frank Forehand, Sheila Hudson and Sarah Croft (Photo by Tom Keene)

The balance of the group, led by Tom Keene, continued the hike to the South Fork to begin work on water diversions. Seventy-nine of them at last count, and brother, it was a good day's work! We were extremely lucky to have several new folks come out to help: Jerry Lott and his wife, Stacey Somppi, Sheila Hudson and Sarah Croft. (It was great to have all of the feminine help for a change)! After a few lessons from Tom, folks paired up and began work. By the end of the day, over 70 of the 79 diversions were cleaned, and cleaned to very demanding standards! Thanks to the new folks plus Frank Forehand, Doug Kleiber, Ralph Heller, Jeff DePaola, and Ken Cissna. We definitely had some tired folks at the end of the day, but we got a lot done, and shouldn't need to touch these diversions again for two or three years. Seventy-eight work hours from our group of 13 plus another 26 hours of travel time.



Quiet sawing!!



Ah!! The sweetness of hard work !

By the way, this section of trail has a gorgeous spot for lunch, right beside the South Fork! We all sat down, stretched out, and enjoyed lunch to the beautiful sound of flowing water. This was a perfect setting to rest for a few minutes before jumping back to the work at hand. At the end of the day, we walked out to the vehicles via Pate Gap where Ralph Heller shuttled us back to Dyer and the rest of the vehicles. And an end-of-the-day ice cream cone courtesy of Darcy Douglas! Hope to see you next month as we work Section 10!

Yonah Mountain Hike

by Mike Pilvinsky

My 70th birthday was on September 2nd and I had been looking forward to that date for months. I chose my birthday to lead a hike up Mount Yonah, 47 years after I was first introduced to that giant slab of granite as a young soldier; a student in Army Ranger School. So, Mount Yonah has always had kind of an iconic meaning for me that other Georgia mountains don't have. It was a great hike. Five BMTA members met the challenge. The weather was a bit cooler than August's oven-like temperatures, but we all appreciated the cool breeze on the windward side of the mountain. After we reached the summit, we descended to have our lunch on the cliffs where I once rappelled. Later, we sipped champagne in celebration at the trailhead. Then we moved to the Yonah Mountain Winery where we gazed at those magnificent cliffs as we tasted the locally grown nectar. At home, after I downloaded our track on my computer I was surprised to see the Garmin recorded 2000 feet of ascent in 2.4 miles, even though the elevation change is about 1500 feet. It is always a bit of a challenge on Mt. Yonah, but I think I had a lot more fun in 2016 than I did in 1969!!



These giant fungi were about 12" across!



From Left: Ken Cissna (not Andre the Giant) Mike Pilvinsky (not a big hairy footed Hobbit), Tom & Carolyn Sewell and Rod Richmond



Mike celebrating reaching the summit of Yonah Mountain 47 years after he first climbed it!!!!

Leaving a Footpath for Generations to Follow.....

by Marge Heller

BMTA Member Ralph Heller was asked to talk to his granddaughter's Brownie Troop in Cumming, GA. The talk, about Hiking Safety and First Aid, was held at Caney Creek Preserve. After the talk, Ralph took the group of 13 girls and troop leaders, on a short hike to point out poison ivy and other plants on the nature trail.



Footpaths to the future!!



Be Prepared! Plant lessons!



Ralph beams with granddaughter Brooke!

Coming Again!! Winter Hike Week in the Smokies January 19-22, 2017 Sponsored by SEFTC

Many of you have in past years enjoyed the winter hiking experience during Wilderness Wildlife Week in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The tradition continues. Under the auspices of the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC), the second annual Winter Hike Week will be held January 19-22 in Pigeon Forge, TN.

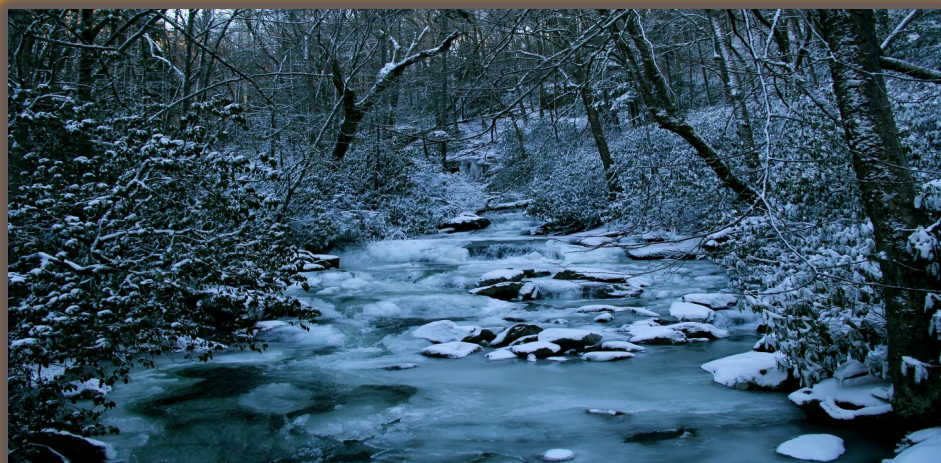
Several hikes ranging from easy to strenuous will be held each day, beginning on Thursday, the 19th, and concluding on Sunday, the 22nd. Participants are urged to arrive on Wednesday afternoon, if possible, to take advantage of the full hike schedule. All hikes will be led by hike leaders familiar with the GSMNP trails. There is a \$25 charge by SEFTC for the event, whether you are there one day or all days. This goes to fund SEFTC's hiking and foot trails program. The SEFTC will hold its annual meeting for SEFTC board members and leadership council members on Saturday. For those not participating in that meeting, a full hiking schedule is provided Saturday.

For all the details and to register please go to the **Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition** website <http://www.southeasternfoottrails.org>. On the opening page click on the icon in the upper right for the "Winter Hiking Event" to access information and registration.

If winter hiking in the Smokies is new to you, it is actually not that strange. For some it is even the preferred season, with the smallest crowds. Ice and snow is usually not a problem, with significant snow collection mainly at the highest elevations. Usually January hikers can hike most days at lower elevations, where most of our treks occur. Should heavy snows occur, alternative low elevation flatter hikes may be substituted.

SEFTC is planning for well over a hundred people for this event. In 2016 SEFTC held this event successfully for the first time, and plans to make it an annual January occasion.

So make your special winter hiking plans now for the January 2017 SEFTC Winter Hike Week in America's most visited national park by going to the SEFTC website and registering and reserving your inn or hotel room as instructed there!



Foothills Landscape Project

Our landscapes are more than trees and streams. They provide a sense of place for people - reflecting our histories and defining our futures. This fall, through a series of community conversations and an online forum we are reaching out to partners, stakeholders and community members to realize a shared vision to address complex conservation challenges across the Foothills Landscape.

We need your knowledge and insights right from the start in order to plan the right work in the right places for the right reasons. Share what you know about the Foothills Landscape with us and others through this collaboration. Use this forum to tell your community what you care about and why. Describe what you want and need from this landscape...and also what you can and do give. Learn from the knowledge that others share. And consider the many other perspectives revealed to all of us through this collaboration.

Project Purpose: The purpose of the Foothills Landscape project is to create, restore and maintain ecosystems that are more resilient to natural disturbances. Specifically, the Forest Service is seeking to enhance and provide quality habitat for rare and declining species, as well as desired game and non-game species; to reduce hazardous fuel loading across the landscape to diminish damaging wildfires; to improve soil and water quality; to provide sustainable recreation and access opportunities; and to awaken and strengthen a connection to these lands for all people.

Join the Conversation! Please join us for any of these Community Conversations where we'll be collaborating on the Foothills Landscape:

Dahlonega:

Thursday, October 13, 6:00-9:00pm
Lumpkin County Community Center
365 Riley Road, Dahlonega GA 30533

Gainesville:

Saturday, October 15, 9:30am-12:30pm
North Hall Community Center
4175 Nopone Rd, Gainesville GA 30506

Clayton:

Tuesday, October 18, 6:00-9:00pm
Rabun County Civic Center
201 W Savannah St, Clayton GA 30525

North Atlanta:

Saturday, October 29, 9:30am-12:30pm
Gwinnett Environmental & Heritage Center
2020 Clean Water Dr, Buford GA 30519

Chatsworth:

Tuesday, November 1, 6:00-9:00pm
Cohutta Springs Conference Center
1175 Cohutta Springs Road, Crandall GA 30711

Share Your Thoughts Online: Can't make it to one of these face-to-face collaboration sessions? Then collaborate with your community online! Visit <http://tinyurl.com/FoothillsLandscape> to add your thoughts, ideas and knowledge to the conversation and see what your neighbors have said. Responses made by December 1, 2016, will provide a valuable snapshot for us all to build upon in this initial planning phase. We'll continue to collaborate as we work together to develop a proposed project over the coming year.

Stay Connected: Sign up to receive information about the Foothills Landscape collaboration by email. You can also keep in touch with happenings on our Facebook page.

The Foothills Landscape: 143,419 acres - stretches across the Chattahoochee National Forest and marks the area where the mountains are visibly reduced to foothills. Shortleaf pine and pitch pine forests are the dominant forest types, with hardwoods accounting for about a quarter of the landscape. The area offers a plethora of recreation opportunities, with nearly 200 miles of hiking, biking, horse and OHV trails and dozens of recreation sites. It includes a portion of the Cohutta WMA and Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Habersham, Lumpkin, Murray, Rabun and White Counties.

Learn More about the Foothills Landscape:

Maps (.pdf)

Foothills Landscape overview

Land and Resource Management Plan prescriptions

Management activities since 2007

Roads, trails and recreation areas

Streams and crossings

Seral stages

Data layers for use with Google Earth (.kml)

Foothills boundaries

Chattahoochee National Forest detail (this is a large file - 55MB)

"Deep data" with detailed charts and graphs displaying various landscape analysis (.pdf)

Our Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)

More information about other Landscapes

Thinking Like a Landscape factsheet

"Thinking Like a Landscape" Forest Supervisor presentation introducing the Foothills Landscape as presented on June 17, 2016 (.pdf)

More info to come! Keep checking <http://tinyurl.com/FoothillsLandscapeCollaborate> for updates.

Much gratitude for your time and thoughtfulness toward the care and management of these lands that belong to YOU. Thank you.

Please contact Staff Officers Mike Brod (770-297-3090, mbrod@fs.fed.us) or Judy Toppins (770-297-3061, jrtoppins@fs.fed.us) with questions.



BMTA Wear Make Great Gifts!

It's not too early to be thinking about holiday gifts and what better way to combine giving to friends and family while also benefitting the BMTA!? Support not only the BMTA but our Corporate Members who offer a variety of products that satisfy your every preference, cotton or wicking.



Available at North Georgia Mountain Outfitters in Ellijay, GA : <http://www.hikenorthgeorgia.com/>



Available at Terra Outfitters, in Blue Ridge, GA or available on-line at: <http://terra.atayne.com/> Atayne



Also many items are available at the BMTA store!!



Get your patch!

INFRA Assessment completed in Cheoah District

by Dick Evans

The US Forest Service has a number of administrative tools with which to administer the lands and properties for which they are responsible. One of those tools for trails, like the Benton MacKaye Trail, is the INFRA (short for Infrastructure) Assessment. This process involves using a measuring wheel to locate features within 1/10,000 of a mile, documenting junctions, water bars, dips, switchbacks, signs and related structures along the trail. Normally, this process is performed by USFS professionals therefore volunteers seldom get involved in this. The data collected, although available to the public, is seldom used by those outside of the Forest Service, in part due to access to the database and related issues.

Because the BMT had major reroutes in 2014 (Yellow Creek Reroute) and 2015 (Haoe Reroute) within the Cheoah Ranger District (comprising Graham County in North Carolina), USFS officials determined that a full INFRA Assessment of the entire BMT within that District was warranted, and assigned this duty to Cheoah District to accomplish during Fiscal Year 2016. Originally, this was planned to be performed in Spring 2016 by Cheoah personnel, but due to the departure of the Trails Technician and other responsibilities, it became clear to Cheoah that they would simply not have the manpower to accomplish this, and asked the BMTA to assist in this endeavor. Several BMTA members residing in the Robbinsville area agreed to do this, subject to our obligations. Given all those, it became evident that we would be doing a "walk-thru" of the BMT in Graham County in August, certainly the hottest and most humid time of the year. This summer was no exception! Trips were done on August 9th, 11th, 12th, 16th, 22nd and 23rd to cover the entire trail. Total hours were 223.

Dick Evans - 54 hours
 Ken Jones - 41 hours
 Jim Kriner - 44 hours
 Dave Hagen - 10 hours
 Kim Hainge - 18 hours
 Keith Mertz - 10 hours
 Ellie Douty - 10 hours
 Katie Lynch - 9 hours
 Phyllis Jones - 10 hours
 Cal Wiederholt - 17 hours



I really want to thank everyone who participated in this effort. On most days, we were able to do some light trail maintenance during the hikes, and were able to note which areas needed more maintenance assistance this fall.

With that in mind, here are some "fun facts" about the Benton MacKaye Trail in Graham County.

Total length of the BMT in the County is 172,238 feet, or 32.6208 miles. Currently, the section between Cold Springs Gap (near Beech Gap) and the Stratton Bald Trail Junction (1.2 miles) is administered by the Tellico Plains Ranger District, but is clearly in Graham County. For our purposes, however, this is considered as Graham County, as is a short section near Mud Gap. The two Ranger District involved coordinate this.

Despite being more than 32 miles long, there are only three named peaks along the Trail in Graham County, Stratton Bald (5,341 feet), Haeo (5,249 feet), and Yellow Creek Mountain (3,246 feet). Bob Bald lacks the required vertical difference to officially be a separate peak. Stratton Bald is the second-highest peak on the entire Benton MacKaye Trail, with only Mount Sterling, at 5,842 feet, being the first. In fact, hiking northbound from Stratton Bald, you have to go close to 100 miles to attain the same elevation, near the Laurel Gap Shelter in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.



Maintenance along Yellow Creek



Stratton Bald

In Graham County, the lowest point on the trail is the crossing of the Cheoah River near Tapoco Lodge, at 1,147 feet. The Trail has only four sections along public roads, the crossing at Unicoi Overlook Parking Area along the Cherohala Skyway, the 0.1 mile road walk near Tapoco Lodge, the crossing at Old Field Gap Road and the crossing of Route 28 near Fontana Marina, where it is co-located with the Appalachian Trail. There is about a 0.5 mile section near Fontana Dam where the trail is on a paved sidewalk, again with the AT.

Most of the distance is US Forest Service lands, with Tapoco Lodge (just less than a mile), Brookfield Smoky Mountain Hydro (formerly Alcoa) with 0.25 miles in two sections, and skirting some private property along Yellow Creek ridge as private property. The Tennessee Valley Authority controls 6.07 miles, with most being leased to Fontana Village. The BMT is co-located with the Appalachian Trail for 2.14 miles within the County.

There are now no significant water crossings, except the bridged crossing near Tapoco Lodge; however, there are so many small creeks in the Slickrock area that we can't count them all. Although there are water sources near Bob Bald, just off the trail near the Hangover, and many along the Windy Gap/Nichols Cove Trails, the section between Tapoco Lodge and Fontana Village is essentially a dry hike. The few sources in that area dry up in scarce rain conditions.



Below the Hangover!!!

Between the Burchfield Trailhead, near Tapoco and Green Gap, the BMT follows the old route of the Appalachian Trail for 7.85 miles, abandoned in 1947 when the AT was rerouted over Fontana Dam. This section was designated as the AT as early as 1935. Earl Schaeffer, on his first thru hike of the AT, missed the reroute and continued west along Yellow Creek Ridge to Tapoco. On his second thru hike, he did not repeat the mistake and followed the actual AT. We have found old double slash blazes along the section and some old blue paint dating from that period.

There are 6.85 miles of the BMT in Federally Designated Wilderness in two sections, from the western terminus of the Haeo Lead Trail to just above Big Fat Gap, and from Big Fat Gap/Windy Gap Trail to Yellow Hammer Gap. The section of trail from the Haeo under the Hangover to Big Fat Gap is arguably the most difficult to reach and perform maintenance, probably on the entire BMT.

During the 2016 Annual Meeting, we are scheduling hikes along most of this section, so come join us and hike a part of the BMT most have never been on!



Worth the climb to the Hangover!!



The stunning view from Naked Ground

Upcoming Hikes

by Mike Pilvinsky Hiking Director

Benton Falls in the Fall!!

This year our hike to Benton Falls near Reliance, TN is on Wednesday, October 26. This later date should offer us some stupendous views of fall color. Many of you have visited this area before and can attest to its awesome views and the magnificent 65 foot waterfall.

Again, we are offering two hike choices: a shorter version of about 3.5 fairly flat miles led by Sara Bland and a somewhat longer hike led by Ken Cissna. Both routes will lead us to the bottom of the falls.

Please plan to bring your own "picnic" lunch and we will dine once again on the tables overlooking McCamy Lake. The facilities are quite nice which adds to an enjoyable experience. On this hike, two hiking poles are required to finesse the steps down to the falls and of course a good pair of hiking shoes with two strong legs in them will help!

And if you have a camera there will be outstanding photo ops!! This is the place!!

For additional information please contact hike leader Sara Bland at [jsbland AT windstream.net](mailto:jsbland@windstream.net).



Ever wonder how those welcome blazes miraculously appear?

Yes! Wood Nymphs!! In this case thanks to Becky Crosby from Valdosta GA, Jane Keene's sister. Becky is a BMTA member, visits us several times a year, and either hikes or works on the trail when she does. She's an enthusiast! She helped Tom Keene paint blazes last weekend on Section 7b, the Sisson Property near the covered bridge by the railroad.

**The deadline for articles for the October Newsletter is Wednesday October 26, 2016
Thanks for your support!!!!**