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BMTA Headquarters



President's Column

“Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage.”

H.L. Mencken

My brother called recently to see how things were going and to let me know he was planning a quick visit south to see Mom. Knowing that I spend quite a bit of time outdoors working in the National Forests, he was surprised to discover that even Forest Service volunteers were impacted by the government shutdown. I must admit that it was difficult to explain why volunteers could not continue to volunteer when needed most. And then I read an article forwarded by BMTA member Mike Kovitch. The column headlined the long term damage a government shutdown could have on our National Park system as funds intended to relieve the maintenance backlog were instead shifted to clean-up from the shutdown. The article was filled with pictures of garbage piling up in National Parks as no one was available for clean-up duties.

‘Running the circus from the monkey cage.’ I am at a loss to see how decisions that should be common sense can elude us when common sense is most needed. There are many things that volunteers cannot do during a government shutdown, but to see work neglected that could so easily be done by readily-available volunteers is just beyond frustrating. One of my pet projects in the coming year will be to see how volunteer groups can help change the policy of discontinuing most volunteer help during government closures, since closures seem to be an ever-more common event.

On a positive note, with the government shutdown lifted on at least a temporary basis, the BMTA is once again able to return to our mission of maintaining the trail. Look for messages from our maintenance directors as interim work trips are organized to address some of the more immediate maintenance needs of the trail. **Sawyers – be advised!!!**

Early in January, our Board of Directors met to review a number of pressing issues. One of the most interesting and useful projects we reviewed was the work done jointly on REI's "Hiking Project" by REI's Kristen Arendt and member Rick Harris with recent updates from Larry Van Dyke. I encourage all members to visit the REI website and search for the 'Hiking Project' or to follow the link below to see some of the work being done and to offer your own updates to the BMT information or to that of other trails. This is an absolutely outstanding project by REI to make information on hiking, camping, biking, running, etc., more available to the public. <https://www.hikingproject.com/trail/7064109/benton-mackaye-trail>

Another item reviewed included a new publication from Georgia Forest Watch entitled "Georgia Mountain Treasures." This publication is intended to highlight some of the more important remaining sensitive areas in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest and push for some higher level of protection from the Forest Service as land management plans come up for review in the next few years. Several areas through which the BMT traverses were prominent in the publication; the board made one or two requests of Georgia Forest Watch for changes to future editions of this excellent publication. These changes – primarily related to wilderness versus national scenic area designations – have been tentatively agreed to by GFW.

The board also re-approved funding for a parking area near Big Stamp Gap. This area has been discussed in the past, but locations have been shifted as the BMTA and the Forest Service worked together to identify sites that would pass NEPA studies. This will be a joint work project funded by both the Forest Service and the BMTA with our portion costing \$3,000 to \$4,000 plus volunteer labor and the Forest Service sharing an equal portion. The new location is approximately 100 yards from the trail crossing at Big Stamp Gap (nearer Winding Stair) and will include a kiosk, parking for about 15 vehicles, and a short connecting trail to the BMT. We expect to begin construction in the spring, unless Forest Service time frames are further impacted by shutdowns. This area should provide safe parking for hikers beginning multi-day treks on the trail.

2019 budgets, BMTA website rebuild, and the 2019 annual meeting cost and location at Fontana Village were among other topics on the agenda -- as was a plan to put more tools in the hands of section maintainers. As an organization, we have always been very frugal with association funds, and that is appropriate. However, we need to replace many of our Pulaskis, trail hoes, loppers, and sling blades with tools that have less wear on the blades and cutting edges. Therefore, our maintenance directors will be retiring some of our tools, giving them to section maintainers – especially those maintainers who cannot easily make it to our tool storage facility. We will replace many hand tools this year and next with new tools – tools that we can continue to use for many years into the future.

Last month in this column, we talked about the need to establish some organization-wide goals for the health and stability of the Association. We mentioned a growth in membership of 5% per year as a starting point. From a financial standpoint, a 5% growth rate this year will fund the purchase of a new brush cutter to help out on Tennessee trail, or 12 6x6 timbers to redo steps at the ascent from the Ocoee River at Thunder Rock Campground, or seven new trail hoes from Rogue Hoes to help with work on 300 miles of trail or a load of rip-rap to disperse water from road culverts on Buck Bald. And it is not just the money, but the volunteers that our maintenance directors need to fill the boots on Saturday work trips.

At our recent board meeting, **we discussed the need to track a few very relevant numbers** every quarter to see what trends we can identify as an organization. Do we have more members or fewer? Are volunteer hours increasing or decreasing? What festivals and events produce the most interest in the organization? Are we successful in attracting more scouts, more colleges, more corporate help? Once we make progress with a scout troop or a college or a company, how do we keep them coming back for more?

Bob Cowdrick, our Georgia State Rep and Larry Van Dyke, our TN/NC State Rep, are both working hard to make inroads with new groups. Larry, with his business world experience with not-for-profits, is helping our group look for 'best practices' with similar organizations. Bob has made some remarkable progress with outreach to both scouts and colleges.

In conjunction with the outstanding work of Joy Forehand and Jeff DePaola on publicity and event/festival outreach, I know our association is moving in a very positive direction.

Next month, we'll focus on some thoughts for maintenance and corridor improvement.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and input.

CPR COURSE

- ◆ **Where:** Blue Ridge Chamber of Commerce Building, 152 Orvin Lance Drive
- ◆ **When:** Saturday, March 2, 2019 at 8:30 AM
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at [bmtabarry AT gmail.com](mailto:bmtabarry@gmail.com) or 770-294-7384

On Saturday, March 2, the BMTA is sponsoring a First Aid/CPR class for members. The class size will be limited to 10 students and first priorities will go to sawyers who need certification or re-certification. Second priorities will go to crew leaders and hike leaders and finally to general membership -- until the class is filled. So if your First Aid Cert has expired or is about to expire, this is your chance to renew.

Anticipating heavy demand, the board has allocated funds for at least one additional First Aid/CPR class. If you are not available for the March 2 class or if slots fill before we can place everyone, we will schedule a second class at a later date in spring or early summer.

Since First Aid/CPR is a prerequisite for saw training, Jim Holland has agreed to teach a saw class specifically for Benton MacKaye members. If you need re-certification or are interested in obtaining your saw card, this is your opportunity to get your First Aid training prior to the saw training date.

The class will be held at the Chamber of Commerce building in Blue Ridge, 152 Orvin Lance Drive, beginning at 8:30 on March 2. Please e-mail me if you are interested in the class, so I can begin setting priorities and scheduling an additional class as needed.

BMTA Memberships Due Now

by Darcy Douglas

RENEW YOUR DUES FOR 2019 TODAY
Just click here to join or renew <http://bmta.org>.

To remain a member in good standing, please take this time to renew your dues. Thank you to each of you who have already done so.

Your dues are used for our maintenance activities, purchasing and caring for tools, as well as the day to day operations of our organization. All those who work are volunteering their time, so there is no financial benefit to any persons from your dues.

There are several levels of membership, and rates for each category will be staying the same for now. Please contact me if you have any questions about the various categories. We are a 501c3 organization.

Learn About Two VERY Special Members!!!

by Darcy Douglas



<https://www.bluejeansblueridge.com/>

[Blue Jeans Pizza - Official Site on Facebook](#)

Ken Brenneman, owner of Blue Jeans Pizza and Pasta Factory in Blue Ridge, Georgia, learned about the Benton MacKaye Trail while hosting nearly 20 of us after a BMTA Board Meeting January 4. After talking with us for a few minutes, he decided to become a Corporate Member, as well as give us a most generous donation!!!!

We'd still love Blue Jeans for its great food, service, and ambience but now we can enjoy dining there even more because the restaurant is a part of our trail community!! As Blue Ridge is a Trail Town, please now know we have a support system with this super restaurant!

Hope you will say thank you next time you are there.

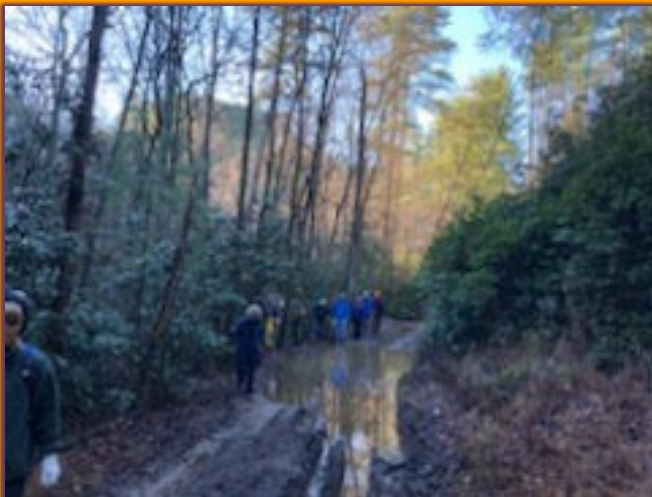
Another member who lives in Florida but wishes to support the trail has gone from being an individual member for several years to a Family Life Membership! Jim and Mary Huggins (who gave permission for their names to go in the newsletter) are now among those who support the organization financially and no longer have to give a thought to renewing their dues each year.

We appreciate you so much, Jim and Mary, and hope you will spend time on trail as well as look some of us up when you are in the area!

BMT: 515 to Weaver Creek, and Back

by Tom Sewell

Tom Sewell led 13 hikers on January 5, 2019, the first sunny day of 2019 on an out and back to Weaver Creek. It was hard to decide whether the hikers were excited by the water sloshed trail or the first sunny day in a week. The group gathered at the Craddock Center in Cherry Log. Just a reminder: there is a Little Free Library at this location for BMT hikers so if you have a few paperback books hikers would like, stop by and refill the library. The hike to Weaver Creek is 5.5 miles round-trip. Thanks to efforts by Karen and Steve Smith the trail is a lot cleaner. Great photos by Suzy Downing and several others.



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BMTA's 2019 Annual Meeting Nov. 1 – 3

Fontana Village Lodge, North Carolina

Watch for more details in future BMTA Newsletters!

Hike the BMT

- Yellow Creek Mountain
- Lookout Rock
- Lakeshore Trail

Non Hiking Tours

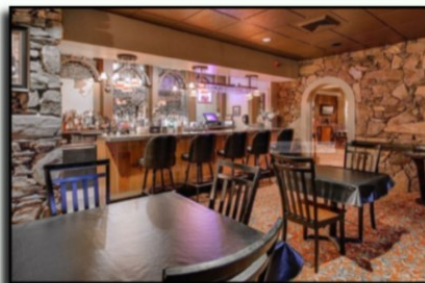
- Fontana Dam
- Wehrloom Honey
- Yellow Branch Cheese & Pottery



COME EARLY / STAY LATE

SPECIAL RATE APPLIES TO YOUR ENTIRE STAY!

Lodge Rooms, Cabins and Campsites



Friday Nite Social

- Complimentary Hors d'Oeuvres
- Cash Bar

BMTA's Annual Meeting

- Awards Banquet
- Featured Speaker
- And More!



For reservations call 828-498-2211.
To receive your discount -
Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!

BMTA's 2019 Annual Meeting Venue Announced Bring the Family!

by Annual Meeting Committee

As you saw on the preceding page, Benton MacKaye Trail Association's 2019 Annual Meeting will be held November 1 – 3 at Fontana Village in North Carolina.

Initial plans are being formulated for a great slate of hikes in some of the most beautiful mountains in North Carolina.

And hikes aren't the only activities on the agenda. Non-hiking friends and family can tour Wehrloom Honey where they'll see the "full spectrum of all that bees do." Tour Yellow Branch Cheese & Pottery, a working pottery studio that also features their own, delicious Yellow Branch cheeses. This list wouldn't be complete without a visit to Fontana Dam, the highest dam in the TVA and the tallest dam east of the Rockies.

Also on the docket are our traditional Annual Meeting activities:

Friday Nite Social with complimentary hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar

More details to come in future newsletter!

Questions: call / email Joy Forehand 706.946.0336 (please leave message) / [jwfbarga AT gmail.com](mailto:jwfbarga@gmail.com).

Bob Turner and Ed Sullivan scouting the BMT to find maintenance concerns to address following the government shutdown.



BMTA Trail Lingo

by Bob Cowdrick

The following are terms, words and phrases that common folks would never understand. When I talk with friends and strangers about the BMTA and drop phrases like Trail Magic, Trail Angel, WFA, I get some pretty amusing looks. I thought you would enjoy this BMTA version of Trail Lingo. Each of us could easily add a few to this list.

Avalanche: A slab of snow rapidly descending down a slope – Best to avoid and fortunately rarely seen on the BMT.



Blaze: A colored mark usually painted or nailed to a tree that helps guide hikers if the trail is hard to follow or makes a turn – White diamonds are the best!

BMTA: Benton MacKaye Trail Association – Best Mountain Trail Hikers Around (MacKaye rhymes with sky).

Bonus Miles: Extra miles you end up hiking – When you made a wrong turn. No one likes these!

Cairn: A manmade rock structure used to direct hikers in the correct direction on the trail – Unfortunately the general public likes to build these for fun or as a form of personal expression. These can confuse hikers and breaks the rules of Leave No Trace.



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Death March: A long boring section of the trail – Sometimes necessary to get to the beautiful part of the trail.

Dirt Bag: A dirty hiker – All of us have been a dirt bag at least once or twice!

Fun Factor: The amount of fun you are having on the trail – If the fun factor = 0 then it's time to turn around and go home!

GORP: Good Old Raisins and Peanuts – With an occasional M&M. A favorite trail snack among many BMTA members.



SAR: Search and rescue – A Common activity on a trail maintenance Saturday when the crew returns to the trailhead short one Pulaski or one crew member!

Trail Magic: When something spontaneously wonderful happens on the trail – You stepped over a copperhead without getting bitten!



Trail Angel: People who give out trail magic – The hiker behind you who said “Watch out for the snake.”

Ultralight: Caring the lightest gear possible – A BMTA Saturday trail crew member who graciously volunteers to carry the blazer's paint brush rather than the Pulaski.

Widow Maker: Trees that have already lost limbs and have a potential to fall – Not a great place to camp or sit under.

Woofers: WFR or Wilderness First Responder – an individual who takes a week long course on medical and backcountry emergencies – A big thank-you to all BMTA members who have taken this course!



Hiking the BMT near the Ocoee River

by Tom Sewell



As usual Monday, January 14, was another day of light rain and fog that had become our norm for this winter. The original plan of hiking the Big Frog and BMT Trails had to be changed as high water conditions along the Rough Creek made it inadvisable to hike the original route.

Instead, our group of hikers, Fritz Gilbert, Tom Sewell (hike leader), Doug Yarns and Evelin Yarns, decided to start on the BMT Trail at FS 221 and hike down to the Thunder Rock Campground.

As this was only 3.2 miles, we added the Rhododendron Trail to the White Water Center and return to give us a pleasant 6.7 miles total.

Would loved to have been able to clear a recent blow-down. This is a beautiful hike but it does require a short shuttle.



GDOT Open House Held Concerning Replacement Bridge for Shallowford Bridge

Recently, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Fannin County and residents residing in the immediate area of Shallowford Bridge have engaged in discussions about the fate of the Shallowford Bridge connecting Shallowford Bridge Road with Aska Road. Since its beginnings in the 1980's, the iron truss bridge has been part of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) ... taking the trail across the Toccoa River as the BMT enters its longest remaining road walk along Aska and Stanley Creek roads to Fall Branch Falls. On January 14, 2019, at the Fannin County Senior Center, the GDOT held an Open House concerning replacing Shallowford Bridge with a new bridge. The event afforded the community the opportunity to ask questions and / or to become better informed about the GDOT's plans to replace the aging structure. The turnout was so high, the GDOT had to send out for more handout literature.

Shallowford Bridge, which turned 100 years old in November, 2018, is included in the Historic American Engineering Record. To the extent possible, neighbors in the area have been repairing the old bridge. At another question and answer venue, Emily Dunn a member of the Georgia Board of Transportation (Congressional District 9), said it would cost approximately \$1,500,000 to bring the bridge up to pedestrian standards ... and that cost is going up each day.



Stunning Shallowford Bridge

The reasons for the need to replace the bridge were available in a GDOT handout:

***“Why We Are Here:** The existing bridge (Structure ID 111-5007-0) was built in 1918, and the bridge consists of one main steel truss span with two (2) approach spans of steel girders. The two approach spans rest on vertical concrete walls with spread footings. The bridge was designed using an unknown design load and is currently posted for weight restrictions. **The structure is classified as fracture critical, and the overall condition of this bridge would be classified as poor.** The deck is in good condition, while the superstructure is in poor condition with major corrosion and areas of up to 100 percent section loss. The substructure is in fair condition with moderate cracking in the vertical walls and moderate abrasion at the waterline. This bridge is classified as having an unknown foundation, and therefore could be at risk of scour. Due to the weight restrictions of the structure, the fracture critical classification, and the unknown foundation of the substructure, replacement of this 100-year-old bridge is recommended. The existing structure will be left in place and closed to traffic following completion of the project.*

***Project Description:** The proposed project would replace the existing steel truss bridge on CR 38 over the Toccoa River. The existing bridge is approximately 11.4 feet wide and carries a single travel lane. The replacement structure would be constructed approximately 175 feet south (downstream) of the existing bridge. **The Benton MacKaye Trail crosses the existing bridge and would be relocated to the new bridge structure.** The typical section of the replacement bridge consists of two 9-foot travel lanes with a 2-foot wide shoulder on the left side and an 11.5-foot wide shoulder on the north side that includes a 10-foot wide sidewalk. The total project length is approximately 0.19 mile.*



Current bridge



EXAMPLE TRUSS BRIDGES

GDOT handout of possible future bridge design.

The new two lane bridge is slated to go in about 150’ downstream from the original Shallowford Bridge. Handouts with pictures showing suggested designs for the new bridge as well as its location also were available.

BMTA was well represented at the GDOT Open House ... Joy and Frank Forehand, Clara and Ed Sullivan, Kathy Williams, Dave Ricker, Darcy Douglas, George Owen, Elma Ettman & more.

BMT – From Dyer Gap to Watson Gap

by Clayton Webster

On a clear, but very cold day, 18 Benton MacKaye Trail Association members and guests hiked the 5.2 mile route from Dyer Gap to Watson Gap on January 25, 2019. This is Section 9 of the Benton MacKaye Trail and we were going northbound. The temperature was 26 degrees when we hit the trail and never reached 40 degrees. However, the sun was shining brightly and there was almost no wind in the woods. There was a dusting of snow all along the route, especially in the more shady areas. In addition, on the drive up to Dyer Gap we were treated to the sight of all the trees being coated in rime ice (freezing fog). The rime ice did not last long. It was primarily at the highest elevations. When we had views out into the surrounding mountain ranges, we could see them really coated on the taller peaks. This was especially true of Big Frog Mountain.

Our hike leader for the day was Larry Dumas, a long-time member of the BMTA and maintainer. He thru-hiked the entire Appalachian Trail in 1978 and he isn't slowing down. Ken Cissna was our sweep.



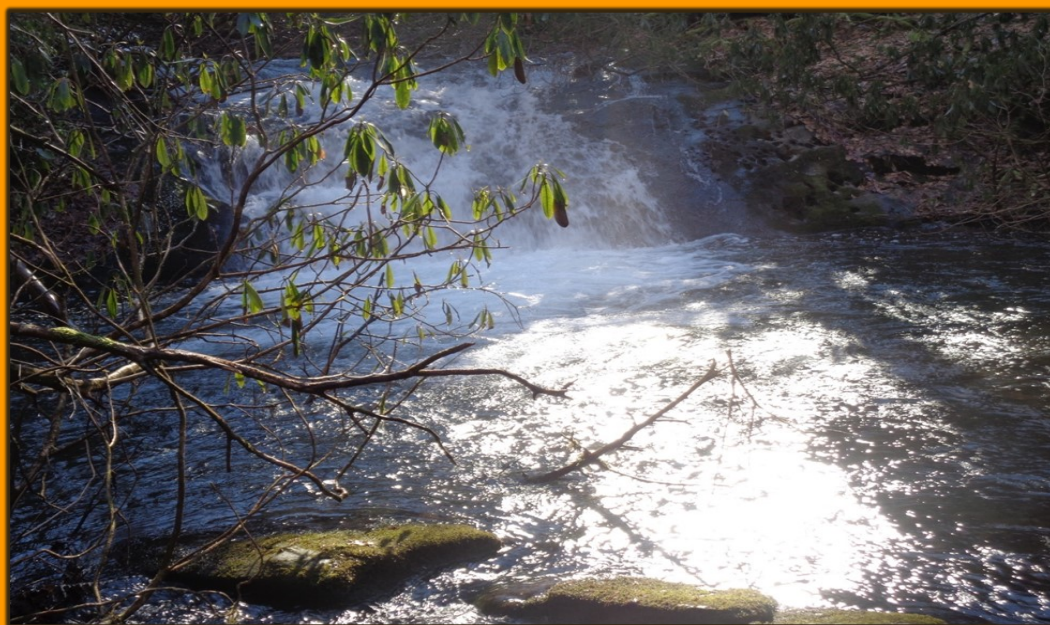
Mike Kovitch was able to get the other 17 hikers in this picture at Dyer Gap as we prepared to start our hike.

Our hike began was pretty much all downhill until we reached the South Fork Trail that went along the South Fork of the Jacks River. Once we reached the South Fork Trail, our plan was to detour a short distance to bushwhack down to Shadow Falls, a hidden treasure. Clayton Webster said that there was actually an Upper and a Lower Shadow Falls with the Upper Falls being easier to access and far more spectacular. Of course, we went to both. We passed by the really rugged route to the Lower Falls and continued on up the trail until Clayton spotted an orange survey tape around a rhododendron bush.

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Upper Shadow Falls



Lower Shadow Falls-complete with swimming pool.

Just a short distance back down the trail we came to the more difficult route to the Lower Shadow Falls. We had to hang onto rhododendrons as we floundered to the bottom. It was worth the effort. However, no one seemed interested in enjoying the swimming pool at the bottom!

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For the day, someone counted 11 streams we had to cross on our hike. Most of these could be managed by stepping on the sometimes slightly submerged rocks. The key was to have a hiking pole, or two, and wait until the person in front of you made it across so you could use your momentum once you got going. We knew that our last crossing was going to be a tough one because it was much wider than all the others we had encountered. But we were not prepared for what we saw when we got to this crossing. Probably four to six giant trees had all come down, one on top of the other, right where the trail crosses the stream. It was not just the trunks, but the crowns of the trees also piled up higher than our heads.



This was about as “deep” as the snow was all day, but that did not keep Karen Steinberg from making a little snow ball to pop fellow BMTA member Fritz Gilbert.

Not long after our hazardous crossing, we came to an intersection where the South Fork Trail continued straight ahead and the Benton MacKaye Trail turned right for us and up the hill. We had reached the Northern Terminus of the Pinhoti Trail. Even though it was getting later in the day, we began to see a little more snow than we had seen earlier. This was because we were on shady north facing slopes as we worked our way up the mountain. It was still just a dusting, but we could say we’d walked in the snow a little bit.

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One spectacular view we experienced was this snowcapped peak that many thought might be Big Frog but as no one knew that much about frogs we did not come to a factual conclusion.



We were treated to the jewels of winter-icicle beards in all shapes and forms-one of the benefits of winter hiking!

One of the interesting things about hiking this area is that it was once well populated before it became wilderness and WMA lands. There is a good-sized cemetery at Dyer Gap as well as a covered picnic/church service pavilion. The old church burned down. Many of the pews were rescued and a pulpit was built. Services and old time "dinner on the ground" are still held here on Decoration Day.



Meet MacKaye

by Joy Forehand

When Karen Plotkin and her husband Steve moved to Blue Ridge 11 years ago, she had no idea a whole new world was about to open up for her. An avid runner Karen began taking her dogs exploring in the woods surrounding her neighborhood and then on to nearby trails.

A friend told her about the trail to the Swinging Bridge. She loved the hike and it piqued her interest in the Benton MacKaye Trail. She wanted to learn more about the trail ... lots more. She's now hiked the BMT from her home near the Swinging Bridge all the way to the Weaver Creek Trailhead as well as portions of the BMT in the Cohuttas.

The time came for Plotkin to look for a new dog and she began to consider possible names. She wanted a name that would be especially meaningful to her and her thoughts turned to the trail she's found so enjoyable – and “Benton MacKaye”. She thought about “Benton”, but decided she liked “MacKaye” much better. Her quest ended when Plotkin saw a picture in an ad in the *Pet Finder*. As soon as she saw the puppy in person, it was love at first sight.

Plotkin said, “I just knew it was meant to be ... he was the one. The breeders had already started his name. They had named him – ‘Mac’!”



When she brought him home a few weeks later, it didn't take long for MacKaye to recognize his new, slightly longer name.

Still a puppy, MacKaye has been on the trail to the Swinging Bridge several times. Full of puppy energy and exuberance at the start of one of the hikes, in true puppy fashion, when his puppy energy evaporated, he laid down and absolutely refused to go further.

As you can see in the picture, MacKaye, now almost six months old, has made the trek on the BMT all the way to the Swinging Bridge!

So, if you're out on the BMT and you see a mahogany red Australian Shepherd sporting a white collar and four white paws, be sure to stop and say “hello” to MacKaye!

Georgia January Work Report

by Phil Guhl

It has been a tough go. Weather did not agree in December and a partial Federal Government shutdown in January...

However, the team made the best of it! Although we could not work, we were able to get some productive scouting done, which will aid in planning future work trips.

We started at The Village Restaurant on January 12th. The teams got acquainted, got a bite to eat, and were dispatched to the trail for some scouting. The attitudes were high.

The weather was cool and even a little damp at times. However, 19 brave souls turned out and eagerly went about their tasks. Despite being a mucky day, they safely scouted over 26.8 miles of the Benton MacKaye Trail!

The sections covered were:

- Section 2b+: George Owen (lead), Patrick Ward, Cindy Ward and Shane Morrison.
- Section 3a-c: Ed Sullivan (lead), Clare Sullivan and Bob Nelson.
- Section 4a-b: Ben Yaun (lead) and Dan Payne.
- Section 5b-d: Larry Dumas (lead) and Janie Hitchcock.
- Section 7a (tree removal): Dave Ricker (lead), Sue Ricker and Darcy Douglas.
- Section 8a-b: Bob Cowdrick.

Additionally, a team built benches at the International Headquarters in preparation for installation on Section 6b (Fall Branch Falls) at our earliest opportunity: Barry Allen (lead), Mike Kovitch, Rob Herman and Gary Hitchcock (also shuttled to Skeenah Gap).

Since we have been somewhat handicapped recently due to events beyond our control, we do plan to play some "catch up" since the government is at least temporarily back in business. On Saturday, February 2, we will have three saw teams go about logging out and doing some light trail clearing on Sections 8a and 8b (Bushy Head Gap to McKenny Gap) and Section 9a thru 9c (Dyer Gap to Watson Gap). On Saturday, February 9, I plan to work section 2b (No Name Gap to Bryson Gap) clearing trail and working water diversions.

Thank you again to all of our wonderful and hardworking volunteers! I look forward to working alongside you taking care of the trail we love.



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 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.

If you are interested in leading a hike or have a hike you’d like to see us offer with someone else leading, please contact me at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. Can’t beat winter hiking – cool, crisp weather, great views. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

February

February 14 (Thursday) Wagon Train Trail – Brasstown Bald. Co-sponsored with Georgia Forest Watch.

5 miles, easy-moderate. Two miles of gentle downhill to the overlook and back, plus up to the tower if we’re feeling like that. Besides the views, we’ll be hoping for the spectacular ice formations on the trailside cliffs (if temperatures cooperate). Alternate date if bad weather, February 19 (Tuesday).

Contact hike leaders Sue Harmon of GFW at suepharmon AT gmail.com or (770) 540-3672 or Ken Cissna of BMTA at kcissna AT usf.edu or (706) 636-1741.

February 15 (Friday) BMT in the Cohuttas: Watson Gap to Dyer Gap.

About 5 miles easy to moderate hiking. Starting at Watson Gap and ending at Dyer Gap. Requires shuttle on dirt road 4 miles.

Contact Hike Leader Tom Sewell: SewellTom AT yahoo.com or text to (706)669-6406.

February 16 (Saturday) BMT – Section 4: Skeenah Gap to Wilscot Gap.

4.6 miles, moderate difficulty.

Contact hike leader Ginny Smith at gmsmith123 AT hotmail.com

February 27-28 (Wednesday-Thursday) Join BMTA on overnight trip to the **Len Foote Hike Inn**.

Don’t miss out! Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or (813) 310-6084.



March

March 15 (Friday) BMT: BMT along Sisson Creek: Five Bridges to Indian Rock.
4 miles; easy plus (some hills); approximately two hours on the trail.

This leisurely, up-and-back, morning hike will follow the BMT along Sisson Creek upstream as far as Indian Rock, crossing the stream five times each way. Besides the bridges, we will enjoy views of three mountain lakes and several cascades. It should be sweet. Following the hike those who wish can join us at Blue Jeans Pizza in Blue Ridge for a recovery beverage, conversation, and good food.

Contact Hike leaders Tom and Jane Keene at [tkbmta AT gmail DOT com](mailto:tkbmta@gmail.com) or 770-548-4935 (text ok).

March 21 (Thursday) Three Forks to Hickory Flats Cemetery on the AT to No Name Bald via FS roads to Long Creek Falls via the BMT to Three Forks.
8 miles, moderate.

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



As we work on redoing our BMTA website we are asking for photographs from each of the 25 Sections. We would like to have high quality photographs that showcase something unique about each section. Please send these to Kathy Williams at [mwill148 AT georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:mwill148@georgiasouthern.edu) with the subject BMTA Section Photos. We will need for you to identify the section and if possible some brief description. We will not be able to give individual credits on the website as in all things with the BMTA this is a volunteer project. Thank you for your help and we look forward to your photos!

**The deadline for the March Newsletter is Tuesday, February 26.
Thank you!**