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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 36, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2019

President's Column

Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.

Elizabeth Andrew

In last month's column, I began a conversation on strategy and tactics, goals and vision. I would like to continue the conversation this month, but I need to digress a bit and touch on a few immediate and pressing thoughts and issues.

First, as the New Year begins, I want to acknowledge that we are all volunteers, giving our time, energy and effort for something in the heart. There's an old saying, sometimes attributed to Winston Churchill, that goes something like "you make a living from what you get; you make a life by what you give." I think that is true – whoever said it. This month, I want to mention Dave Ricker who recently spent several days in the Pensacola area with a volunteer crew working on Hurricane Michael relief. Glad your chainsaw experience and Forest Service training could be of help, Dave! You really are making a life by what you give. Many have contributed in similar fashion through the years; I could list several of my maintainers who have helped clean up after other disasters. Now that I have the bully pulpit, I plan to make a point of highlighting our volunteers in the future.



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In January, the new board is gathering for the first of four meetings scattered throughout the year. Topics on the agenda include the following: approval of a 2019 operating budget, final approval of the 2019 annual meeting location, discussion of the 2020 annual meeting venue, outreach and publicity plans for 2019, website redesign, Big Stamp Gap parking and kiosk progress, as well as several other important issues. In next month's President's Column, I'll update membership on important decisions coming from the January board meeting.

Another issue cropping up is the federal government shut-down. As many of you know, BMTA volunteers are considered USFS employees (unpaid) while volunteering on public lands. Should there be an injury or accident while volunteering in the National Forest or Park system, we are covered by Workers' Compensation Insurance provided by the Federal Government. However, in the event of a government shut-down, volunteers are treated as non-essential personnel and asked not to work on Forest Service Lands. We recently sent a note to all section maintainers asking them to hold off maintenance work until the government shutdown is resolved. The same would be true of the monthly work dates: no work on USFS lands. However, we CAN schedule work on private lands (i.e. Section 7 in Georgia) **OR** we can encourage members to hike the trail and provide feedback for future work dates. Hiking in the National Forest is certainly **not** prohibited, and this may be an opportunity for some to enjoy a hike and help check some trail after all the recent rain and wind on saturated ground. Our new maintenance directors, Phil Guhl and John Zardis, will have their hands full trying to plan work with the shutdown in the background, so keep on the lookout for last-minute work plans or changes.

Now, let's continue the conversation we started in December.

Last month, I tried to highlight the difference between the tactical role of a Maintenance Director and the more strategic role of the President. I also asked for feedback and guidance on goals we should pursue as an association. Let me share a couple of thoughts I have about goals for our organization.

One of the most critical issues we face is growth -- both in overall membership and in participation rates of existing members. My goal is a 5% sustained growth rate in membership. What does a 5% growth rate mean in real numbers? For an organization of roughly 300 members, we need to add a net of 15 new members in 2019. That means if we lose 15 existing members, we need to find 30 people to replace them and grow the organization by the 5% goal. The other part of membership is to encourage better participation, especially from members local to TN/NC/GA area. We (the board) are working hard to get more people on work events, to man booths at festivals, to lead hikes, and all the other items that are critical to a volunteer group. PLEASE make a New Years' Resolution to help us this year if you could not do so last year! Next month, I plan to share a few more goals and discuss how progress toward goals will help our group stay vibrant, challenged and motivated.

I sure hope we'll see you on the trail!



Only on “Foote”

by Ken Cissna

If you'd like to join BMTA next month at the famed Len Foote Hike Inn, this is your last chance—only four rooms remain!

Again this year, BMTA will be able to enjoy a *half price* winter outing to the beautiful Len Foote Hike Inn, Georgia's extraordinary backcountry lodge.

We'll be arriving on February 27th, departing on the 28th. The hike is 5.1 miles of moderate difficulty. Cost is about \$100 per person for a two-person room (including tax)—about \$70 for a single. The hot showers are wonderful, the rooms are heated and the dinner after arrival and breakfast the next morning are superb.

If you're interested, contact Ken Cissna, BMTA Hike Director, at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@usf.edu) for further information and the BMTA reservation code. And do it quickly.



BMTA Membership 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.

Our CORPORATE MEMBERS for 2018 are listed here.... please use their services and mention you are a member of the BMTA!! Thanks to each of these eight for their contribution to the BMTA.

1. **Ens and Outs – Unitarian Universalist Church – Atlanta, Georgia**
2. **Historic Tapoco Lodge – Robbinsville, North Carolina – <https://tapoco.com>**
3. **Korean Alpine Club – Duluth, Georgia (ask me for contact information)**
4. **Lowery and Associates Surveying Company, LLC – Cartersville, Georgia - <https://lowerylandssurveys.com>**
5. **North Georgia Mountain Outfitters – Ellijay, Georgia – www.hikenorthgeorgia.com**
6. **Save Georgia's Hemlocks – Dahlonega, Georgia – <https://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org>**
7. **Jeff and Lori Patterson – Copperhill, Tennessee – Airbnb for hikers and runs shuttles for hikers – faithandhopetogetherATgmail.com – (ask me for phone number)**
8. **Starr Mountain Outfitters – Etowah, Tennessee – <https://www.starrmountainoutfitters.com>**

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THANK YOU!!!

BMTA Stanley Gap Hike

by Clayton Webster with photos courtesy of Mike Kovitch

On December 7, nine members of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association were led by Evelin Yarns for a five mile hike on the Stanley Gap Trail starting from the Deep Gap Trailhead on Aska Road. We just barely escaped the bad weather headed for the area for the next few days.



All bundled up at the Deep Gap trail head are from the left: Tom Sewell, Clayton Webster, Evelin Yarns, Linda Hiles, Larry Jarkovsky, Howard Baggett, Hank Baudet, and Lina Prince.

It was actually misting as we started out, but eventually the sun even came out for a while although the temperatures remained in the high thirties to low forties. Our route took us up to the intersection with Section 6 of the Benton MacKaye Trail. According to Howard Baggett's Garmin, this was an elevation gain of 1,247' within the 2.5 miles. Everyone did well on the steep climb as we took several breaks along the way.

All the leaves were down, so the trail had a wintery look. However, there was still a lot of green along the way. We saw mountain laurels, rhododendrons and American hollies in addition to numerous white pines. On the ground there were entire hillsides of Christmas ferns and sometimes big areas of running cedar or ground pine. We saw several cranes fly orchids, rattlesnake orchids, pipsissewa, wild ginger, trailing arbutus, and partridge berries. So it was not all brown.

On our way back down, it had cleared off enough for us to see some of the towering mountains in the surrounding area. The fog had settled in the valleys and was very beautiful.



Just one of the magnificent long-distance views we were treated to!



Mike Kovitch, in his BMTA Maintainer hat, leads us up the Stanley Gap Trail towards the Benton MacKaye Trail intersection. Mike took most of our pictures, but Clayton got a shot with him in one. The trail, covered by wet leaves, was sometimes pretty tricky to walk on with the rocks and roots not visible. However everyone was sure footed, and no one fell!



There were a number of downed trees at the intersection of the Benton MacKaye Trail and the Stanley Gap Trail to enable everyone to have a nice seat for lunch. Nothing can top "Lunch on a Log!"

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip: Section 12d

by Rick Harris with photos courtesy of Mike Kovitch and Rick Harris

Fifteen maintainers came together in Tennessee on Saturday, December 15, to log and brush out Section 12d, McFarland Rd to Lost Creek Campground. We had received several comments from hikers about numerous trees and thick brush blocking the trail. We met at Hall's Grocery on TN-30 at 9 AM, had our tailgate safety talk by Rick Harris, and then split into two groups. One group, led by Barry Allen, went to the Lost Creek end of this 3.9 mile section and the other group, led by Rick Harris, went to the McFarland Road end.

Barry's group went up the steep switchbacks to the clearing at the top and headed down the fairly flat trail south toward Rick's group. Barry cut about 20 trees and several additional small dead standing trees along the edge of the trail while others used brush cutters, loppers and swing blades to clear the brush. This section is often in bad shape because of all the dead pine trees which keep falling across the trail.



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Rick's group cleared the first half mile of the trail through a burned out area and also logged out the gated road from McFarland Road to where it intersects with the BMT. Ken Jones was our chainsaw guru. The road had three bad blow downs which took quite a long time to clear. Then the crew headed down the gated forest road section of the trail clearing several small trees off the road. At the end of the road, Rick's crew then headed uphill through an area with lots of brush and dead pines to the top of the ridge. A short ways after reaching the crest of the ridge, the northbound crew ran into Barry's crew, ending our day of work.



We then returned to our vehicles and went to Flip Flop Burgers for burgers, fries and beer. Bryan Mayhew, the owner of Flip Flop Burgers, joined us on our work trip and he opened up his restaurant just for us weary, hungry souls. This is always a great place to end the work trip. The food is great and the eating area is a fun area to socialize. And the view of the Hiwassee River is magnificent! Those maintainers on the trip included Rick and Brenda Harris, Barry Allen, John Zardis, Hank Baudet, Boe Rudder, Ken Cissna, Ken Jones, Bryan Mayhew, Rick Parks, Ben Yaun, Keith Mertz, James Anderson, John Budka, and Mike Kovitch.



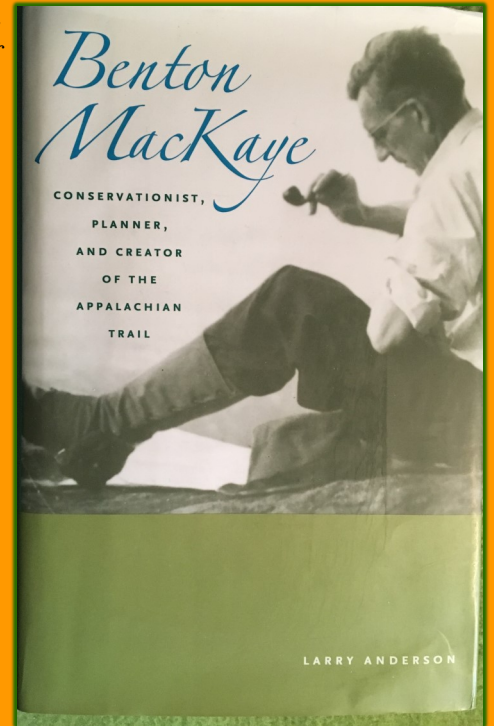
The Benton MacKaye Biography: Unexpected Pleasures

by Tom Keene

Editor's Note: This review was originally published in the BMTA Newsletter in March 2008. The book reviewed remains the only full length biography of our association's namesake.

All his life Benton MacKaye loved maps. At fourteen he made a series of "expeditions" around Shirley Center, his Massachusetts hometown. For each expedition he made a detailed entry into his personal "Geographic Hand Book," complete with hand-drawn maps that included his own contour lines. Later, his reports for the Forest Service were famous for the striking hand-drawn maps he invariably used to make his case. His enthusiasm for maps was also on display in his article proposing the Appalachian Trail. Many of his friends thought the striking overview map MacKaye drew for the 1921 article did more to capture people's imagination than all the rest of the article together.

MacKaye's preoccupation with maps is one of many insights that Larry Anderson brings to light in his fine biography *Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail* (Johns Hopkins Press, 2002). Numerous maps are reproduced in the text. They are fascinating.



Larry Anderson is not an academic historian; he is a journalist who grew up in a Massachusetts near Shirley Center, loved the outdoors and developed a life-long fascination with MacKaye. The book is meticulously researched and filled with fascinating details about MacKaye's numerous grand ideas and his many famous friends. Gifford Pinchot, Lewis Mumford, Aldo Leopold and Walter Lippmann are just four of the famous names that appear frequently in the book. And, of course, there is the famous non-friend, Morton Avery, whose differences with MacKaye over the building of the AT, are given fair and thoughtful treatment.

The book pulls no punches about MacKaye's political radicalism. He was, for a time at least, a card-carrying socialist. This fact may seem shocking to Americans whose political attitudes were formed the Cold War. But MacKaye was born in 1879. His formative years were a full generation before the Russian Revolution, at a time when capitalism was in its most bruising and raw form, when the Robber Barons were at full cry and when men and women who tried to organize labor unions were not rarely gunned down by thugs hired by their employers. In an age when economic development seemed a brawling, ugly free-for-all, the "socialist" notion of planning, particularly at the local and regional levels, appealed to many. Indeed socialism's call for government planning of some aspects of economic life then seemed respectable, almost genteel, especially when compared to anarchists and syndicalists of the time, who advocated a vast general strike that would, they hoped, bring capitalism to its knees and bring on world revolution.

Genteel socialists like MacKaye were an important element in the Progressive Movement that drove reform efforts in the U.S. from Teddy Roosevelt's assumption of the presidency in 1901 through the early 1920's. MacKaye got in on the ground floor. He was the first graduate of Harvard's new forestry program in 1903 and one of the first employees of the U.S. Forest Service established by Roosevelt in 1905.

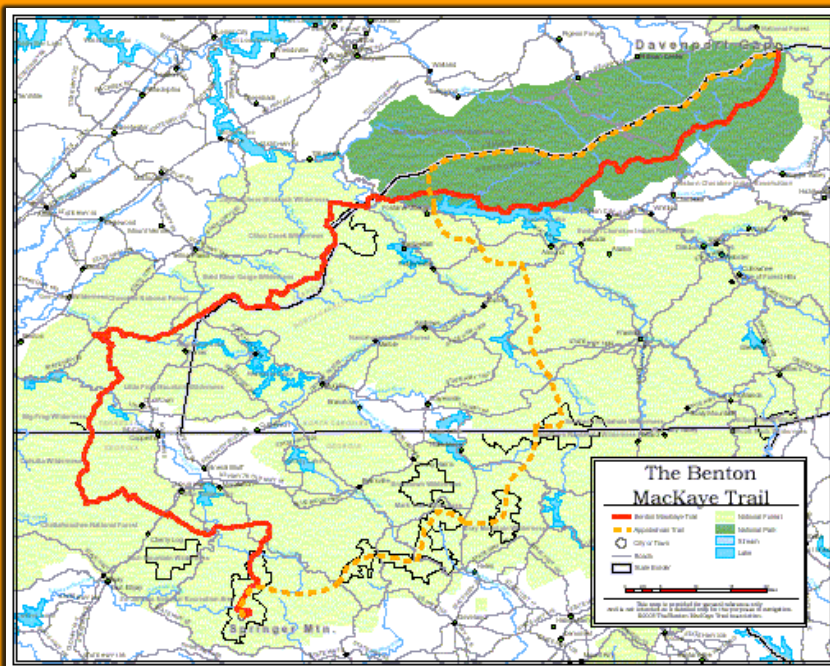
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Readers of this newsletter will mostly be aware of MacKaye's advocacy of the Appalachian Trail and perhaps his contributions as a founder and early president of the Wilderness Society. But Anderson shows that Benton MacKaye played a behind-the-scenes role in many early conservation victories. One of these, the implementation of the Weeks Act of 1911, is of crucial importance to our trail.

By 1911 the young Forest Service had shown it could successfully manage the existing National Forests in the west. Indeed, Gifford Pinchot, the highly vocal first Chief Forester, gained such a reputation for aggressive empire building that he was forced from office. But virtually all National Forest land was in the west, where it had fallen, largely by inattention, into Federal hands as a result of the Louisiana Purchase and other U. S. Government acquisitions. Creating National Forests in the east was politically tricky. Opponents claimed the government had no constitutional right to condemn and buy private land to create such forests.

Advocates of the eastern National Forests pointed to the Constitution's commerce clause, which the Supreme Court had interpreted as giving the federal government the right to take actions necessary to maintain the nation's navigable rivers. Proper maintenance of the forests at the headwaters of the eastern rivers, argued advocates, was essential to assure a moderate and manageable flow in navigable rivers. Opponents questioned this reasoning, and forced an amendment to the Weeks Act requiring that the U. S. Geological Survey (not the "empire-building" Forest Service!) should undertake a scientific study to determine whether in fact the management of the headwaters forests would have a significant impact on navigable waters.

The U. S. Geological Survey set-up the needed scientific study, but needed an experienced forester to take the necessary measurements in the New Hampshire's White Mountains, which were to be the test case. The man loaned to USGS by the Forest Service was none other than our own Benton MacKaye. MacKaye spent the summer of 1912 in the White Mountains collecting data. He knew the area well from hiking trips as a young man and he was very eager for a National Forest to be created in the area. On his return to Washington he produced a powerful report filled with charts, tables, and, of course, maps. His report became a major part of the Geological Survey paper that enabled Weeks Act to withstand numerous court challenges. That success was vital to the creation of the National Forests in the east, including much of the land through which the Appalachian Trail and our own trail pass.



The efforts surrounding the Weeks Act are only one of many dramas in which Benton MacKaye was involved during his long career. If you want the whole story, you really will want to read the book.

One final word: In 1930 MacKaye gave an address to the Appalachian Trail Conference as it was battling to create that famous trail. One of his lines strikes me as good advice for us as we work toward approval of the BMT extension through to the Smokies.

MacKaye's suggestion:

"Speak softly and carry a big map."

Maintainer Report Form Changes

by Debra Guhl

With the onset of a new year, we look forward to many great things in the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. Change sometimes comes with newness. The same can be said for the Maintainer Report Forms.

Ralph Heller has been receiving and tracking all the work and the hours reported from the Maintainer Report Forms for *many* years. I think everyone would agree with me that Ralph is the Volunteer's Volunteer. He does things behind the scenes without complaint or seeking credit that make the BMTA function smoothly. He is one of the organization's silent heroes.

Of the numerous tasks and responsibilities he performs, he is handing the responsibility of tracking the information from the Maintainer Report Forms over to me, Debra Guhl. He will still be available for me to consult with; however, with this all maintainers will need to send the forms to a different location. My contact information is below. Please send the Maintainer Report Forms to:

Debra Guhl
167 Preserve Parkway
Ball Ground, GA 30107
dguhl AT guhlspace.com
404.713.8012

Let me know if you have any questions. Thank you!

Shallowford Bridge Sparkles



The iconic Shallowford Bridge has been in the news lately as the DOT has scheduled hearings for a possible replacement. One of the options being considered is a new bridge being constructed alongside the original one with foot traffic being allowed on the old bridge.

BMT: Hudson Gap to Fowler Mountain, and Back

by Tom Sewell

Tom Sewell led Ginny Smith, Marie Traylor, Linda Miles, Ken Cissna and Fritz Gilbert on an 8.6 mile hike on Sunday, the 16th of December. We started at Hudson Gap and hiked to McKenny Gap then on to the top of Fowler Mountain in the Cohuttas. The day was one of our few December days with clear blue skies and crisp breezes. Most of the hike was along a ridgeline with beautiful views of Cashes Valley, Rich Mountain and the Cohuttas. Once we returned to McKenny Gap, we took the unmarked trail to the old roadway and then back to Hudson Gap. Other than the long drive on FS#793, requiring a four wheel drive to access, this section of the BMT should be on your to-do list.



Georgia December No Work Report

by Phil Guhl

My second month into it...December...and I am not sure what to say...nothing. We were all dressed up with nowhere to go.

I planned to work Section 4a from Skeenah Gap to Payne Gap. My bride and I went out and scouted the trail. We flagged water diversions, flagged nicks, identified blow downs and made notes of Mountain Laurel that needed lopping. As the workday approached, the temperatures began to drop. The weather forecast indicated potential freezing conditions. I was on the bubble; what do I do? I know we work in cold weather and even in snowstorms but the concern was getting people safely to and from the trail. I talked with or exchanged messages with many wiser than me and determined the risk was not worth the potential cost, so I cancelled the trip on the second Saturday in December.

My intention was to reschedule the work on another day in December. Mother Nature shot me down once. Now however, it was Uncle Sam's turn to do the same. My alternate dates were deterred by a Federal Government shutdown. As volunteers for the U.S. Forest Service, we are classified as non-compensated, non-essential personnel and are covered by the government's Workman's Compensation Insurance...when the government is not shutdown. We are not authorized to work in any National Forests when we do not have coverage or are without U.S. Forest Service oversight.

Dang it! What's a maintenance director to do in times like these? Well, I will share my plan for 2019 and additionally, my alternative plans should Mother Nature and Uncle Sam conspire against me in the future.

For 2019 I plan to do a "Tour of Georgia" maintenance cycle. Barry Allen had done this once before and it was a real eye opener and a gem for touching all of the trail in Georgia in a single year, so I thought since it has been a couple of years, we can do it again. The "Tour of Georgia" means we will work on a section of the trail that matches the month of the year. Some examples are January = Section 1, February = Section 2, and on through Section 12 (which is technically Tennessee's section). Emergency maintenance needs may come up during the year, so December might be the catch up month where we would work on a section we had to skip in order to deal with some urgent issue that unexpectedly comes up or gets reported. If that hasn't confused you, you can explain it to me. Actually, this is a very simple plan to follow and I look forward to it.

Now, what about Mother Nature and Uncle Sam? In the event we are unable to get to or from the trail safely or we are unable to work due to a government shutdown, we will make different plans versus cancelling. For weather events, we will look for amicable dates to reschedule the maintenance trip during that same month. This could be on the third weekend or during a weekday. Trips on weekdays typically have fewer participants, but the folks who have been attending have big hearts and strong backs, thus I expect we will still have a great time and be extremely productive.

Should the second Saturday of the month coincide with a government shutdown, my plan is to move forward with the gathering of people for the purpose of hiking. We will hike sections of the trail where we need some feedback in order to plan future work trips. The hikers will need to make note of issues, but I want us to spend the day out in the woods enjoying the trail we work so very hard to maintain. Technically, this would not be a "work" trip. There will be no tools, no digging, no brushing, no sawing...just some note taking while savoring the fruits of our passion.

I hope each of you were able to enjoy some quality time with your friends and family during the holidays and I look forward to a wonderful 2019 as we move ahead!

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.

January

January 14 (Monday) Big Frog Trail to Rough Creek Trail to BMT to Thunder Rock Campground. 8.1 miles, moderate. Most of the elevation change is in last few miles, downhill to the campground.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna AT usf.edu or (813) 310-6084.

January 22 (Tuesday) Trails of Boling Park in Canton.

Join us for 5-7 miles of easy to moderate hiking to celebrate Hike Leader Howard Baggett's 80th birthday.

Contact Howard Baggett at Howardeb AT windstream.net.

January 25 (Friday) BMT Section 9, Dyer Gap to Watson Gap, with a side trip to Shadow Falls. Easy hike of 4½ miles with lunch along South Jack's River.

Contact hike leader Larry Dumas at ledumas AT hotmail.com.

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](mailto:gmsmith123@hotmail.com)

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

Don't miss out! Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at [kcissna AT usf.edu](mailto:kcissna@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)



The deadline for the February Newsletter is Wednesday January 30.

Thank you!