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BMTA Headquarters



Quest for the Benton MacKaye Trail To Be Designated a National Scenic Trail Update

In May 2022, HB #7884, the *Benton MacKaye Scenic Trail Act*, was introduced in the House by Representatives Steve Cohen and Chuck Fleischmann. Currently the bill has seven co-sponsors.

Now, time is running out for the legislation to be passed during this Congress. A September hearing before the House National Resources Committee is essential to getting the bill included in an omnibus bill for Public Lands, Outdoor Recreation and/or Natural Resources.

A secluded forest pathway traversing 288 miles in three states, three National Forests, six Wilderness Areas and 93 miles in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) definitely exceeds the qualifications for National Scenic Trail designation.

- ◆ The trail’s natural, scenic beauty combined with its numerous cultural and historic features make it a shining jewel in the Southern Appalachian Mountains.
- ◆ Ninety-five percent of the BMT is on land managed by either the Forest Service or the National Park Service – just 15 miles of the trail remain on public roads/private lands so new land acquisition will be limited and will be on a willing seller basis.
- ◆ The BMT easily meets the standard of long-distance trail viability – the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) has maintained the trail ever since construction began in 1980 (42 years ago). The association’s 771 members include over 200 trail maintenance volunteers.
- ◆ The BMTA has developed a long-standing and positive relationship with both the Forest Service and the National Park Service.
- ◆ The 800-mile Arizona National Scenic Trail is the most similar to the BMT in that the majority of its route is on National Forest and National Park lands. When it was designated in 2009, no Feasibility Study was required – even though more than 100 miles of the trail had not been built and were outside of federal lands.

The BMT clearly meets the requirements of the National Trails System Act for National Scenic Trail status. There is no reason to delay this designation for years in order to have an unnecessary Feasibility Study. To achieve our goal of having the BMT designated a National Scenic Trail, we need Representative Cohen and Representative Fleischmann to advocate for a September hearing for HB #7884 before the House Natural Resources Committee. If your permanent residence is in either [Representative Cohen’s](#) or [Representative Fleischmann’s](#) district, please contact them to request a hearing for HB# 7884 before the House Natural Resources Committee.

For additional information, contact BMTA President Ken Cissna, kcissna@usf.edu.



Can You Help?

Used Cargo Trailer

BMTA needs an enclosed cargo trailer in good shape. (approximately 6' wide by 10' long by 6'6" tall). The door can be either a rear door/ramp or a side door. The trailer will be used to store all of our tools in one Tennessee location. If you — or if you know of someone — who has something close to this size cargo trailer and is interested in selling ... or possibly donating it, please contact [Barry Allen](#).

4-Drawer File Cabinets

We need four 4-drawer file cabinets in good shape. The cabinets will be used to protect and store our historical records. Plans are to store the documents in the Blue Ridge area. If you, or if you know of someone who would like to sell or donate one or more 4-drawer file cabinets, please contact [Joy Forehand](#).

Blogger for BMTA's Website

Do you enjoy telling people about the Benton MacKaye Trail? As BMTA's Chief Blogger, you'll recommend great hikes, tell our guests about the importance of trail maintenance, share stories about the BMT, etc.

Having worked on a WordPress website is a big plus but we can train most computer-savvy volunteers. If you're interested, contact [Joy Forehand](#).



Quest for National Scenic Trail

Our Continued Success Depends on YOU!

— If You Love the BMT and You Live in the United States —
Please ask your Senators/Representative to support our quest.

Ask your friends and family to contact their
Congressional representatives as well.

Use the links below to find your Senators/Representative.

[Senator](#)

[Representative](#)

Make your dinner reservations Now!



BMTA's Annual Meeting Nov. 3 – 6, 2022
Fontana Village Lodge, North Carolina

**Annual Meeting and
Awards Banquet November 5, 2022**

Buffet Entrees

Chicken Piccata

Garden Vegetable Ricotta Lasagna

Smoky Mountain Rainbow Trout

These are accompanied by Tossed Garden Salad, Assorted Artisan Rolls, Roasted Vegetable Medley and Green Bean Almondine. For dessert: Apple Cobbler!

Water ... Sweet / Unsweet Tea & Coffee at Beverage Station.

Additional beverages available at the Cash Bar.

\$30

Dinner Reservations

Payment must be received by October 17, 2022!



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

Raffle!

BMTA's Annual Meeting & Hike Fest November 5, 2022

Fontana Village Lodge, North Carolina



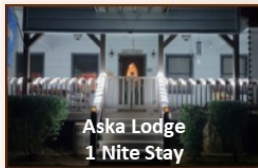
Fontana Village
2 Nite Stay



Tapoco Lodge
2 Nite Stay



Len Foote Hike Inn
1 Nite Stay



Aska Lodge
1 Nite Stay



Lost Creek Cabins
2 Nite Stay



Unicoi Lodge
2 Nite Stay



Fireside Outpost
2 Nite Stay



Charit Creek Lodge
2 Nite Stay



Nantahala Village B & B
2 Nite Stay



Proceeds go to

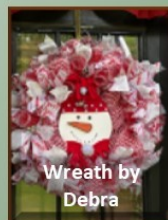
**BMTA's
Land Acquisition Fund**

Tickets available
at the meeting!

\$10 each or 3 for \$25

7 for \$50

16 for \$100



Wreath by
Debra



Gourd by
Patty



Quilt by
Lydia



JOE SISSON AND THE VALLEY CROSSING

PART 2

by Marty Dominy

Ted Reissing had a successful first meeting with Joe Sisson on the subject of placing the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) through the Sisson development northwest of U. S. Highway 76 / Georgia Highway 5 in Gilmer County. Discussion of details relating to the trail location, easements and how the trail would be built were left to the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) President Marty Dominy and Trail Construction Supervisor Bill Porter. Bill would go on to serve his first of three terms as president in 1993.

Knowing David Sherman had worked for the National Park Service in the acquisition of property for the protection of the Appalachian Trail, Marty asked him for advice regarding negotiating a potentially donated easement. "Ask for as much as you can get" was the response. "A five-hundred-foot-wide easement would be ideal."

Some days later, Bill and Marty arrived at the Sisson sales office to meet with Joe Sisson. The conversation in the lobby started nicely enough. When the discussion of how the easement would be structured was under way, Marty asked for the five hundred feet that David had suggested. At this point, Mr. Sisson said nothing, got up, and walked into his office. Bill and Marty looked at each as one does when opportunity suddenly vanishes. Yet, Mr. Sisson reappeared a few minutes later and spelled out what was acceptable. There would be a narrow easement through lots that had not already been sold, the trail would follow the development road in areas where lots had already been sold, the easement and trail would be moved within the property if future development warranted it, and his surveyor would prepare a plat and have it recorded. Easements were recorded in the Gilmer County Courthouse on November 13, 1992, and on February 1, 1993.

In the following weeks, there were meetings on the property to determine the route of the trail. At the time, Mr. Sisson's property did not extend to Boardtown Road. To remedy this, an agreement was reached with Mr. Higdon, one of Mr. Sisson's relatives, to locate the trail along a property line and a driveway to reach Lucius Road. After reaching Indian Rock, the BMT ascended the cove as it does now, turned south up a side cove, crossed the ridgeline, and made its way to the property line which it followed west for about a quarter mile. After descending Mr. Higdon's driveway, the new route intersected the old route along Lucius Road at a point 0.6-mile southeast of Boardtown Road. Plans were in place to finish this by National Trails Day in 1993. However, other National Trails Day events and warm weather conspired to keep the volunteer attendance at a modest level for the late spring and summer months. A map and trail description insert for the new route was published in the *August 1993 BMTA Newsletter*. A formal ribbon cutting for the new section was held on September 11, 1993.



Trail improvements did not stop with the ribbon cutting. Lawrence Jump, BMTA vice-president at the time, took a keen interest in this section, and when the opportunity presented itself, led the effort to build a trail shelter below Indian Rock with material donated by Mr. Sisson.

The Indian Rock Shelter was constructed in the summer of 1995. Access to the shelter was via a BMT relocation away from Indian Rock Road that was completed earlier that same year. Lawrence would go on to develop several loop trails connecting to the BMT in the area between Indian Rock and the Higdon easement.

Continued next page



At one meeting, whose date is lost to time, the boundaries of the Sisson property were being reviewed on the sanitized version of the segment map. Mr. Sisson pointed to a property on the map and asked who the owner might be. Marty was a bit surprised as he thought Mr. Sisson would know all of the land ownerships for miles around. Marty checked the roster of landowners and produced the name and address of an individual in Florida. Mr. Sisson scribbled this information on a note pad. By the next time the two talked, Mr. Sisson had purchased the property. In due course, he suggested a new trail route directly to Boardtown Road at the county line as he now owned property extending all the way to that road. The new route extended up the cove past Indian Rock, crossed over the ridge to reach Tipton Gap, and climbed the eastern flank of Patterson Mountain. After crossing the Tennessee Valley Divide twice, the route descended a narrow cove to reach Boardtown Road. By the end of the July 1997 work trip, work on this relocation was substantially complete. As with any number of other relocations, finishing work, blazing and signing would come later as part of individual or small group efforts that were not advertised as regular monthly work trips.



Over the years, minor adjustments have been made in the trail location as more cabins were built. By 2011, it was clear that the bridge in the cove near the railroad would need replacement. Work efforts in July and August of that year not only replaced the bridge in the cove but added two new bridges on either side of the shelter. Again, Mr. Sisson provided materials for this project, including surplus catwalk sections from billboards that now form the deck of the bridge in the cove. His meeting room along Cherry Log Creek was the venue for multiple BMTA meetings.

The old cabin adjacent to the Sisson sales office serves as the BMTA headquarters. For over 30 years, the generosity of Joe Sisson and his family has truly been extraordinary!

Dyer Gap to the Pinhoti Trail

by Steve Dennison with photos courtesy of Jen Tingle



We hiked and worked on a small blowdown! Trail Maintainer Jen Tingle got the final cut to separate the trip hazard. We then used two small logs to push the blowdown off the trail separating the tree from its root ball. A chainsaw would have been quicker and easier but neither of us is FS Sawyer Certified. Muscle power today!



You Won't Want to Miss This Year's
Annual Meeting & Hike Fest

Fontana Village, NC

November 3-6, 2022

For Complete Details, Go to [Annual Meeting](#)

GA Work Trip

Photos courtesy of Clare Sullivan, Patty Masters and Cindy Aurin



Safety briefing before a great crowd!



New volunteer Susie Farmer cleaning out a water diversion with her hands. Team Leader David Watkins digs with a branch. Did someone forget the digging tools ?



Cindy Aurin, Carol Nufer, Ian Guttridge, Will Kirchoffer and Andy Meeks. Cindy is a 2021 AT Thru Hiker and takes good selfie pictures.



Chef Patty had delicious dishes prepared for the after social. Some dishes were vegan, some were vegetarian and some had meat. All were yummy!

BMTA Supermen Battle the "Heart of Darkness"

by Clare Sullivan

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) Supermen went into combat against the growth in the "Heart of Darkness" and won! Shane Morrison, Joe Cantwell, Gilbert Treadwell and Barry and Dan Allen camped on Beaverdam Bald the night of August 26, 2022. They started working two miles-in early the next day.

Their first battle was making it up the steep, rocky Forest Service road to Beaverdam Bald. Their next battle was against yellow jackets on the trail. The second crew forged the road on Saturday morning and worked the first two miles towards Sandy Gap. That crew also worked in the rain for part of the day and had to stop to change a blown tire going down the steep, Forest Service road. Brush cutters and chainsaws were the weapons of choice. The second crew consisted of Steve Bayliss, David Blount, Keith Mertz, Rob Pound, Ed Sullivan and lopper Clare Sullivan. Approximately seven miles of trail was cleared of growth that was six feet high in some areas. A job well done!



Supermen at Beaverdam Bald



This shows how bears love to scratch against our signs.



Rob Pound takes a break at Sledrunner Gap from miles of brush cutting.



Clean Trail Days & GA Work Trip September 10, 2022

Sections 2d, 6b, 8c-d & 10b

Toccoa River » GA Hwy 60 , Fall Branch (at Rd) » Stanley Gap Trail,
McKenny Gap » Fowler Mt. and Jacks River Trail » Hemp Top Trail



A Job for Everyone!

- ◆ Logout
- ◆ Brushout
- ◆ Water Diversions
- ◆ Water Crossing Improvement

Clean Trails Day

Trail workers and event staff will acquaint our guests with hiking and maintenance opportunities with BMTA as well as the importance of using Leave No Trace (LNT) principles when on the trail.

[Register Online for the Clean Trails Day/GA Work Trip Now!](#)

Or Contact

Bob Cowdrick, bcowdrick@comcast.net

“Boys” and Their Toys in the Woods

by Clare Sullivan



Before



Measuring “Scientifically.” AKA tree Hugging.



Toothpicks for Bigfoot





YAASSSS!!! Ed and Patrick used BMTA's new Stihl chainsaw-purchased in 2021, courtesy of member donations. The new saw and larger saw bars make cutting these big trees easier, safer and quicker than year's past.

Fun Day on the BMT/John Muir National Scenic Trail or The Paw Paws Are Ripe!

by Clare Sullivan with photos courtesy of Judy Price and Clayton Webster

Hikers enjoyed a fun adventure on one of the most scenic sections of the Benton MacKaye Trail. This section runs from Towee Creek to Childers Creek along the Hiwassee River (Tennessee's first Scenic River). From a high point, our first half-mile boasted beautiful scenic views before we traversed down the side of a ridge paralleling the river. We were fortunate to see rocky outcrops, a bald eagle, wild turkeys, rushing rapids, lovely wildflowers and ripe paw paws! Lynda Lunn shared that she makes banana cake and muffin recipes using paw paws. Tasting the paw paw was a new yummy experience for most of us. Our 4.2-mile hike was exciting as well as educational since much of the trail is within three feet of the roaring whitewater river. Being in the Reliance Historical District was "a first" for five of the hikers. Such a good day!



Paw paws in the wild.



Hearts-a-Bustin blooming!



Charit Creek Lodge Spring Getaway



Sign up today for a backcountry, hike-in only spring getaway at Charit Creek Lodge May 18, 2023. Stay in rustic log cabins with solar showers, flush toilets, wood stoves — plus two great meals! Trail options to the lodge range from 1.8- to 5.5-mile hikes. Charit Creek Lodge is located in Tennessee's Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. With two of the largest side by side natural arches in the world, this trail is unrivaled in Eastern America.

For more information and trip details contact trip leader [Clayton Webster](#).

**Trip is combined with the Over the Hill Hiking Group which has reserved the lodge.*



Horse Sections of the Benton MacKaye Trail

by Bob Ruby and Ken Jones

Here is a current summary of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) horse sections as of August 2022. We are thankful to the Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen (SABCH) group for assisting with trail maintenance over the years.

Section 10c	Spanish Oak Gap to Hemp Top	3.1 miles
Section 10d	Hemp Top to Double Spring Gap	1.3 miles
Section 11a	Double Spring Gap to Big Frog	1.3 miles
Section 14b	TN Highway 68 to Buck Bald Road	1.1 miles
Section 14c	Buck Bald Road to Unicoi Gap	3.6 miles
Section 15a	Unicoi Gap to Tate Gap	4.5 miles
Section 16c	Sledrunner Gap to Brookshire Creek Xing	3.2 miles
Section 16d	Brookshire Xing to Sugar Mountain Rd	2.5 miles
Section 18a	Beech Gap to Cold Springs Gap (only the gated road portion of this section)	1.8 miles

That is it until Fontana Dam. All of the 93 miles of BMT in the Smokies are horse trails except for the last seven miles from Mount Sterling to Big Creek Campground. The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) and the SABCH have a long-time history of joint maintenance on shared trails.



TN/NC Work Trip—September 24

Section 18a – Beech Gap to Bob Bald

- ◆ Brushout
- ◆ Lop Rhododendrons
- ◆ Logout

Please bring a brushcutter if you have one.

[Register for the TN/NC Trip Now!](#)

2023 BMTA Nominees for Board of Directors

Thanks to the nominating committee: Bob Cowdrick, Darcy Douglas, Joy Forehand, Clare Sullivan and David Watkins. These will be voted on at the Annual Meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the meeting.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| President | Ken Cissna |
| Vice President | Clare Sullivan |
| Secretary | Judy Price |
| Treasurer | Lydia Burns |
| GA Maintenance | Bob Cowdrick |
| TN/NC Maintenance | Nelson Ashbrook |
| Smokies Director | David Watkins |
| Membership | Frank Forehand |
| Communications Director | Joy Forehand |
| Conservation | Patrick Ward |
| Hiking Director | Kelly Motter |



Old Maintainers never die. They just get scarier!

Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Tom Sewell, Hiking Director

Guidelines for Our Hikes

Because hiking in the outdoors is good for one's mental and physical health, we encouraged BMTA members and others to continue hiking during the COVID-19 health crisis *and to do so safely*. Thus, we continued our hiking program during 2020 and 2021.

Due to the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, we have further modified our hiking program:

- ◆ We have resumed allowing shuttle hikes but caution that (a) no hikers should ride with another or have another ride with them if they are concerned about their safety and (b) unvaccinated hikers should not assume that others will want to ride in vehicles with them.
- ◆ Carpooling is permitted but not required.
- ◆ Any potential hiker who is feeling ill or has been exposed recently to a person with an active case of COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
- ◆ Hikes are limited to a maximum of 10 participants in Tennessee and North Carolina and 12 participants in Georgia. Hike leaders may impose lower limits.
- ◆ Masks are optional, but hikers should maintain an appropriate distance from one another.

September



September 10 (Saturday) GA Work Trip - Clean Trails Day at Fall Branch Falls and the Swinging Bridge. Watch the [website](#) for details!
Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net.

September 16 (Friday) BMT in Tennessee between Ducktown and Coker Creek. Highway 68 to Buck Bald with 360-degree views and return. A total of 3 miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison.
For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

September 17 (Saturday) BMT off the Cherohala Parkway in Tellico Plains, Tennessee. A great, short, moderate 4.5-mile round-trip from Mud Gap to Whigg Meadow. This special hike will give us an opportunity to learn about the annual bird banding and data collection that has taken place at Whigg Meadow. Hike Leader Kelly Motton. For more information contact hikeleaderKM@bmtamail.org.

September 23 (Friday) Gahuti Lite. Five intersecting trails loop at Fort Mountain State Park. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). About 5 moderate miles. Highlights include cascading creeks, a long-distance view and a lakeside walk. Ends with a moderate uphill walk. Hike Leader Ken Cissna.
For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



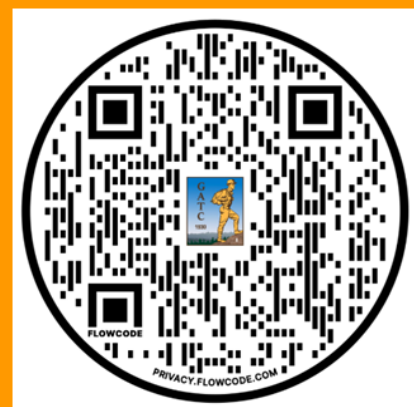
September 24 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip Section 18a Beech Gap to Bob Bald.

Contact Keith Mertz keithmertz@hotmail.com.

September 24-25 (Saturday-Sunday) The Annual Trails Skills Workshop at Lake Winfield Scott. For more information and to preregister scan the QR Codes, or Contact: Jay M Dement, 404-731-1901, tsw@georgia-atclub.org.



Preregister



Brochure

September 26 (Monday) BMT from Highway 60 to the Suspension Bridge and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 7.4 miles. Lunch by the Toccoa River and the BMT's iconic Suspension Bridge. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

October

October 3 (Monday) BMT Dyer Gap to Shadow Falls (South Forks Trail to intersection of the Pinhoti) about 5 moderate miles round-trip. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.org.

October 7 (Friday) Shady Falls Trailhead to Lake Blue Ridge and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 7 miles. Views of Lake Blue Ridge including very close up during mid-hike lunch. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



October 8 (Saturday) GA Work Trip. Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net.

October 14 (Friday) BMT in Tennessee between Ducktown and Coker Creek. Highway 68 to Buck Bald with 360-degree views and return. A total of 3 miles. Hike Leader Anne Anderson.

For more information contact hikeleaderAA@bmtamail.org.

October 21 (Friday) BMT Highway 515 to Weaver Creek and return. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy 5 miles mostly along dirt roads. One “rock hopping” stream crossing could get your feet wet depending on stream levels and recent rainfall. Hike Leader Ken Cissna.

For more information hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

Fontana Loop Trail TR157 and Portions of Bee Cove Trail TR421 Closed due to Transmission Line Upgrades

Robbinsville, NC, August 22, 2022 - The Fontana Loop Trail TR157 and a portion of the Bee Cove Trail TR421, will be temporarily closed for visitor safety due to transmission line upgrades in the area. These trails are located in the Fontana Village Area of Graham County, NC and are accessed by North Carolina Highway 28N.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is upgrading high voltage transmission lines to address deficiencies in the electrical power distribution system to Fontana Village. Temporary trail closures are necessary to ensure visitor safety during construction activities. It is anticipated that this project will take approximately 2-3 months and be completed by the end of October. Upon project completion, the trails will re-open to the public. This trail closure will remain in effect until all work has been completed.

As the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) runs concurrent with both the Fontana Loop Trail TR157 and Bee Cove Trail TR421 in this area, BMT users are advised to utilize the Fontana Village Shuttle between Fontana Village and Fontana Marina. Walking along North Carolina Highway 28N is not recommend due to narrow road shoulders and winding curves along the highway.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park will increase camping fees beginning next year. Parking tags will be also required to be displayed on any motor vehicle parked within the park boundary beginning March 1, 2023.

Approved parking rates are \$5 for a daily parking tag, \$15 for a parking tag for up to seven days and \$40 for an annual parking tag.

Use of all park roads will remain toll free. Parking tags will not be required for motorists who pass through the area or who park vehicles for less than fifteen minutes. Frontcountry family campsite fees will be \$30 per night for primitive sites and \$36 per night for sites with electrical hookups.



Please, Leave No Trace!



- ◆ Plan Ahead and Prepare.
- ◆ Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.
- ◆ Dispose of Waste Properly.
- ◆ Leave What You Find.
- ◆ Minimize Campfire Impacts.
- ◆ Respect Wildlife.
- ◆ Be Considerate of Other Visitors.

lnt.org

2022 BMTA Corporate Members!

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is grateful for the help and support provided by our Corporate Members. When you visit one of these businesses, please identify yourself as a BMTA member and be sure to thank them for their support!



ALDHA



AMVETS POST 911
POLK COUNTY, TN



BLACK SHEEP RESTAURANT



CELEBRATE BLUE RIDGE
CABIN RENTALS



DE LEON PROPERTY
MANAGEMENT



GEORGIA FOREST WATCH



HISTORIC TAPOCO LODGE



KOREAN ALPINE CLUB
OF GEORGIA



MOUNTAIN WISDOM CAMP



NORTH GEORGIA TREKS
PHOTOGRAPHY



OCOEE ANIMAL HOSPITAL



SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS

2022 BMTA Corporate Members

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is grateful for the help and support provided by our Corporate Members. When you visit one of these businesses, please identify yourself as a BMTA member and be sure to thank them for their support!



SPIRITS KNOB
JEFFREY DEPAOLA (404) 550-4488



STAR MOUNTAIN OUTFITTERS



THE DUCKTOWN COPPER INN



THE HIKE INN
FONTANA DAM, NORTH CAROLINA



THE JUSTIS LAW FIRM LLC



WILDWOOD MAGIC



Nature's Art Gallery, courtesy of Jen Tingle.

The deadline for the October Newsletter is Wednesday, September 21.
Thank you!