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Points of Interest

Click the title to go directly to the page.

[Dick Evans](#)

[Another Step Closer](#)

[President's Column](#)

[Guide](#)

[Kirkland Creek Trail](#)

[Nominating Report](#)

[New Partnership Program](#)

[Shallowford Bridge Update](#)

[Upcoming](#)



BMTA Officers 2023-2024

President:	Bob Cowdrick
Vice President:	Clare Sullivan
Secretary:	Jessie Hayden
Treasurer:	Lydia Burns
GA M/D:	Joe Cantwell
TN/NC M/D:	Nelson Ashbrook
Smokies Coord:	David Watkins
Hiking Director:	Kelly Motter
Membership:	Frank Forehand
Communications:	Joy Forehand
Conservation:	Patrick Ward
Past President:	Ken Cissna
Store:	Sue Ricker
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
State Rep GA:	Darcy Douglas
State Rep TN/NC:	James Anderson



BMTA Headquarters

Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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Dick Evans

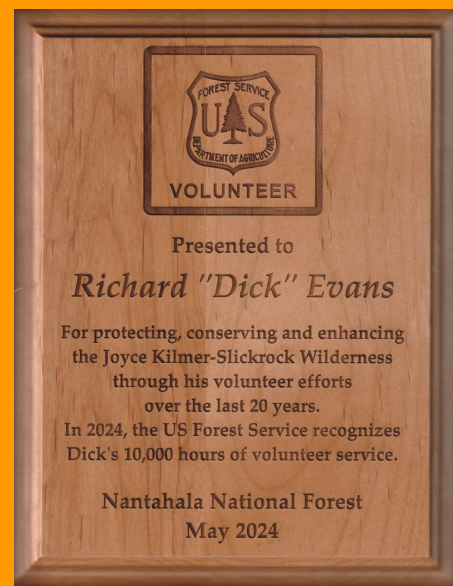
USFS's Region 8 Trail Maintenance Volunteer of the Year for 2024

by Joy Forehand

Former Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) President Dick Evans was presented the USFS's Region 8 Trail Maintenance Volunteer of the Year Award for 2024 by Heath Emmons, Natural Resource Specialist with the Cheoah Ranger District. Evans was selected from volunteers from 13 states in the southeastern United States – he had been nominated twice before.

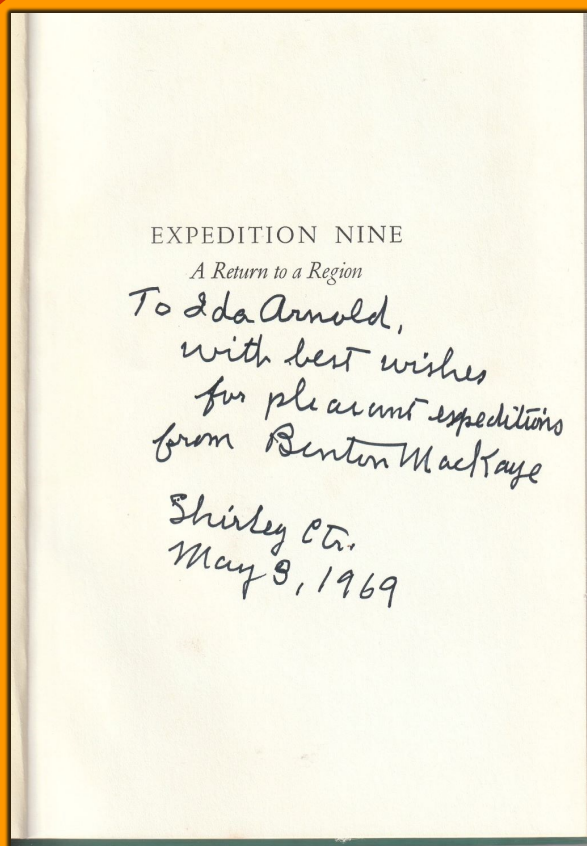
A volunteer with Region 8 for 20 years, Evans has reported over 10,000 volunteer hours in the Cheoah Ranger District. In addition to being the President of the Partners of Joyce-Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness, his impressive list of accomplishments include:

- ◆ Replaced deteriorated/non-existent signs in Joyce Kilmer and Snowbird Wildernesses, critical signage needed by search and rescue teams to find lost/missing hikers.
- ◆ Obtained a \$12,500 grant to rehabilitate six miles of trail damaged by the 2016 Maple Springs wildfire.
- ◆ Obtained \$30,000 to improve the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest trails, bridges and interpretational signage.
- ◆ Organized the 75th anniversary celebration of the original dedication of the Nantahala National Forest as well as the 100-year commemoration of the combat death of poet Joyce Kilmer.



Evans graciously accepted the award saying, "This isn't just an individual award -- this took the work of a lot of people. It's a group effort and I accept it on behalf of the group."

All of the hours relating to the award were tied either to the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness or the Snowbird Wilderness in the Cheoah District – some of those hours were earned while working on the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) which traverses the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness.



Evans spent part of his youth in Shirley, Massachusetts, the home of Benton MacKaye, but it wasn't until 2005 that Evans discovered his family's close connection to MacKaye.

Evans' Aunt Ida was a frequent companion on MacKaye's "tramps" or hikes in the Shirley area. One of Evans' prized possessions is a copy of MacKaye's book, *"Expedition Nine, Return to a Region"* which MacKaye endorsed to Evan's Aunt Ida in 1969.

When he was five years old, Evans' family moved to Cape Cod where he enjoyed a number of outdoor activities including camping, hiking and yachting. He attained the rank of Eagle Scout and went on to study Zoology and Electrical Engineering at the University of New Hampshire (UNH). Being named a Distinguished Military Graduate and Commander of the Corps of Cadets at UNH, he then entered the US Army, attending the Army Ranger School before being assigned to the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, part of the Third Infantry Division. He attained the rank of Captain in the US Army Signal Corps while on active duty in Germany, remaining in the Reserves for another 17 years.

He continued honing his hiking skills throughout his time in Germany, climbing the Matterhorn in 1974. Later adventures led him and his wife Margaret to spend five years in Iceland and a staggering 15 years in Japan. He climbed Mount Fuji twice as well as enjoying many other hikes in Asia.

His enthusiasm for hiking and the outdoors evolved into a dedication to maintaining the trails he'd come to love. While living in Florida, Evans became President of the Florida Trail Association which was accorded the prestigious designation of National Scenic Trail under his watch.

When Evans and his wife, Margaret, retired to North Carolina, he knew he still was not the type to sit around watching "Judge Judy".

The BMT caught his attention and he contacted BMTA member, Walt Cook, to see how he could help with the yet to be completed trail. Cook quickly accepted his offer saying, "The trail in that area is just a line on a map right now. We don't have anyone in your area." Evans joined the BMTA in 2003, eventually serving as president in 2011 and 2012.

His list of accomplishments for the BMT are many. Perhaps the most recognizable is the iconic picture of Evans and his grandson, Jackson, admiring the view from Bear Pen Gap. The picture exemplifies BMTA's motto, "...leaving a footpath for generations to follow". Jackson is planning to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. He is looking forward to working for SAWS next summer before setting off for college. Jackson's long-term goal is to serve on the BMTA Board, perhaps serving a term as President as well.

Evans' most impressive accomplishment for the BMTA was his campaign to get the BMT routed off the Tail of the Dragon (US 129) in North Carolina, a project known as the Yellow Creek Reroute. Evans and BMTA member, Ernie Engman, worked on the project for nine years.

When the route for the BMT was first sketched out in the mid-1980's, it traversed what then was Alcoa property to the Tennessee/North Carolina State Line at Deals Gap. Plans were for the BMT eventually to be routed over the old Appalachian Trail path in the area to Dalton Gap, then down to the existing trail system.



Part of that route later became known as the Trail of the Dragon (US129), which now features 318 curves in 11 miles and is considered America's number one motorcycle and sports car road in the nation. As attractive as that is to motorized vehicles, the road walk was treacherous for hikers following the BMT.

Another issue to confront was – the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) was switching to a system which would require a reservation for each date and campsite inside the Park. The BMTA needed to find a way to provide thru hikers with a logistically realistic method to make those reservations.

Initially, Evans walked US129 with the GSMNP superintendent who gave his blessing to some type of project to increase hiker safety by avoiding that road walk. Engman and Evans now faced two daunting challenges: First, to find a reasonable route for the BMT and second, to get 35 government entities, groups and organizations to agree to the plan.

Evans learned an Appalachian Trail (AT) segment that served as the AT from 1935 - 1947 was still in inventory and no NEPA would be required to use it as the reroute. On a cold day in December with a blizzard predicted, Evans and Engman bushwhacked from Tapoco Lodge to Fontana, establishing that the route shown on the old maps did exist and would be a suitable replacement for the existing path. This meant the BMT could be routed away from US129, joining the AT to cross Fontana Dam and enter the GSMNP on the Lakeshore Trail. The Tennessee Valley Authority, the GSMNP and the AT approved of the concept.

More than 80 volunteers put in over 1,000 hours to complete the project, including Sierra Club and American Hiking Society work trips, Partners of the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness volunteers as well as local volunteers. Approximately 750 hours were turned in by BMTA members for the project which was completed in 2014.

Other improvements Evans initiated while President included switching the *BMTA Newsletter* from distribution via USPS to electronic distribution and putting BMTA's financial statements into a far more understandable format.

In 2017, Evans was presented with BMTA's Distinguished Service Award for truly exceptional service to the BMTA over many years. He was named BMTA Trail Worker of the Year for Tennessee/North Carolina the same year.



BMT- Another Step Closer

by Joy Forehand

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) is another step closer towards achieving their goal of having the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) designated a National Scenic Trail (NST)!

A July 24, 2024, hearing was held before the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands for H.R. 8403 – a bipartisan bill in the House of Representatives calling for a feasibility study of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) with the goal of designating the BMT a National Scenic Trail.

Testifying before the committee on behalf of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) was former BMTA President Ken Cissna. The hearing was an extremely important step in the legislative process towards the eventual passage of H.R. 8403.

The bill was introduced May 15, 2024, in the U.S. House of Representatives by Steve Cohen (Democrat from Tennessee), Chuck Fleischmann (Republican from Tennessee), Chuck Edwards (Republican from North Carolina), Scott DesJarlais (Republican from Tennessee), Lucy McBath (Democrat from Marietta) and Nikema Williams (Democrat from Atlanta).



Oral Testimony (5:00)

**Federal Lands Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee
July 24, 2024**

**Ken Cissna
Benton MacKaye Trail Association**

Good morning, Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and other members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you regarding protecting the Benton MacKaye Trail by passing the **Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act**, which authorizes a feasibility study into designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a National Scenic Trail. I would also like to thank Congressmen Cohen and Fleischmann for their leadership on this bill as well as our partner, the United States Forest Service, for their help and support over the years.

Continued next page

My name is Ken Cissna. I live in Morganton, Georgia among the southern Appalachian Mountains. I am the Immediate Past President and a member of the Board of Directors of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association.

Work began on the trail in 1980, and it was completed in 2005. It runs for 288 miles from Springer Mountain in Georgia through Tennessee and North Carolina, enters the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and ends in the northeast corner of the park. 95% of the trail is on protected federal land—either national forest or national park.

The development and maintenance of the trail depends on volunteers. The BMTA is an all-volunteer organization, and more than 200 of us work on the trail each year, generating about 8,000 hours of volunteer maintenance annually.

The National Trails System Act defines National Scenic Trails as having outstanding scenic values and high-quality recreation experience. The Benton MacKaye Trail has, for many years, met those high standards. The trail traverses some of the nation's most unique natural lands and biodiverse habitats as it runs through three national forests (Chattahoochee in Georgia, Cherokee in Tennessee, and Nantahala in North Carolina), six federally designated Wilderness areas, and more than 90 miles in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

A NST designation would have important benefits for the trail and for local communities. It would enhance the trail's value as a first-class recreational destination and bring with it important economic benefits to its rural communities. This designation will also improve the people's quality of life by increasing outdoor recreation opportunities for families and individuals, young and old. Designation would have the added benefit of helping to pass on our outdoor heritage to future generations.

Currently, the trail has no official federal designation. Although the BMTA has been successful in building and maintaining the trail with our Forest Service partners, becoming a National Scenic Trail would provide significant protections. Without this, we face risks of potentially losing these lands for future generations.

Our efforts to designate the trail as the twelfth National Scenic Trail has strong local support from all states and counties the trail goes through, including Chambers of Commerce and Visitors' Bureaus; local businesses and political leaders; and numerous trail, hiking, and outdoor organizations. We know of no opposition to protecting this trail as a National Scenic Trail.

We are seeking a feasibility study with a one-year deadline. Although this might appear to be an ambitious timeline, the trail was fully completed 20 years ago, has a strong volunteer non-profit organization that manages and maintains it and has for over 40 years; and is very popular with hikers. The trail is extremely deserving of designation as a National Scenic Trail, and we are confident that the feasibility study will agree. It is reasonable for Congress to expect the study to be completed within a year after this legislation is approved.

In conclusion, the Benton MacKaye Trail is a vital natural and economic resource that warrants national recognition and protection. Its historical significance, economic impact, and the numerous benefits it provides to communities and individuals make a compelling case for its designation as a National Scenic Trail. I urge the Committee to support this designation, ensuring the long-term protection of the Benton MacKaye Trail as a cherished part of our national heritage.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

President's Column: Celebrating Seven Months of Remarkable Progress

by Bob Cowdrick

Dear BMTA Members and Supporters,

We are thrilled to share with you the tremendous progress the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) has made over the past seven months.

Our collective efforts have yielded significant achievements in various areas, reflecting our commitment to preserving and enhancing the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT).

Here's a detailed look at what we've accomplished together:



1. Membership Growth and Renewals

Our membership base continues to flourish, thanks to your unwavering support and engagement. We've seen a substantial increase in renewals and new memberships, highlighting the growing enthusiasm for our mission. Engaging presentations, social media outreach and word-of-mouth advocacy from our dedicated members have all played a crucial role in this growth. Your dedication not only sustains our association but also drives our initiatives forward.

2. Fiscal Responsibility

We have been diligent in managing our finances, ensuring that every dollar is used effectively to support our goals. Through careful budgeting and strategic allocation of donations, we've maintained a solid financial foundation. This fiscal responsibility allows us to invest in trail maintenance, advocacy and community outreach.

3. Trail Maintenance and Safety

Maintaining the BMT's 288 miles is no small feat, yet our trail crews have risen to the challenge with exceptional dedication. Over the past six months, we've successfully removed significant blowdowns and deadfalls, ensuring a safer and more enjoyable experience for all hikers. Our volunteers have devoted countless hours to this vital work, demonstrating remarkable commitment and skill. The feedback from hikers has been overwhelmingly positive.

4. Advocacy and Legislation

We recently have taken significant steps forward in our quest to have the BMT designated a NST. We now have bi-partisan bills in both the House and Senate that call for a feasibility study of the BMT. In addition, former BMTA President Ken Cissna testified before the House Federal Lands Subcommittee concerning the bills. This legislative effort is a testament to our vision of elevating the trail's status and securing its future. Achieving NST designation would bring national recognition, benefit the economies of near-by local communities, increase funding opportunities, and provide greater protection for the BMT. We are grateful for the support of our members and partners in advancing this crucial initiative.

Continued next page

5. Strengthening Partnerships

Our relationships with land managers and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) stewards continue to thrive. These partnerships are essential for the effective management and preservation of the BMT. By working collaboratively, we ensure that the trail remains a cherished natural resource for generations to come. We continue to try to establish new partnerships with local schools, universities and outdoor clubs, engaging the next generation of trail stewards and fostering a deeper appreciation for the natural world.

6. Promoting the BMTA

We've been actively promoting the BMTA at various festivals and events, spreading the word about our trail and its significance. These efforts not only raise awareness but also attract new members and supporters to our cause. Your participation and enthusiasm at these events have been invaluable in showcasing the BMTA's vibrant community. We continue to leverage social media and our website to share news, updates, and stories from the trail, further expanding our reach and impact.

The progress we have made to date is commendable, and the credit goes to our members who made this happen. Your dedication, hard work, and passion are the driving forces behind our achievements. As we look ahead, we are excited about the future and confident that, together, we will continue to make great strides in preserving and enhancing the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our mission.

Happy trails!

Bob

Raffle!

BMTA's Annual Meeting & Hike Fest November 2, 2024

Unicoi Lodge — Helen, Georgia



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



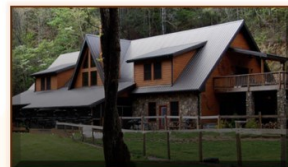
Unicoi Lodge



Sawyer



Tapoco Lodge



Barn Quilt

Six Ponds Farm

Custom Painting
Joanna McNally

Quilted Item
Adri Herman

Stain Glass Art
Broken Glass

October Surprise!
Lydia Burns



Len Foote Hike Inn

Early Donations from our Supporters!

For lodging info, go to [Accommodations](#).

Maintaining the Benton MacKaye Trail

A Comprehensive Guide for Surveying for Future Maintenance Trips

by Joe Cantwell

The Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) spans 288 miles through some of the most picturesque and rugged terrain in the Southeastern United States. Regular maintenance is crucial to ensure the trail remains safe and enjoyable for hikers. As a trail maintainer, conducting surveys is essential to identify and prioritize maintenance tasks. This guide will help you systematically assess your section of the BMT, noting specific issues and their exact locations.

Blowdowns

What to Look For:

- ♦ **Location and Documentation:** Record the precise location of each blowdown to the nearest 0.1 mile. For example, "Blowdown at mile 4.3".
- ♦ **Size:** Measure the diameter of the blowdown. Note whether it is small (<6 inches), medium (6-12 inches), or large (>12 inches).
- ♦ **Level of Effort:** Estimate the effort required for removal. Small blowdowns may require a hand saw, while larger ones will need a chainsaw and possibly additional manpower.



This is how Bigfoot measures a blowdown! HA!



Introduce grandkids on how to measure!



You can use your BMTA bandana to measure as well.

Continued next page

Water Diversions

What to Look For:

- ♦ **Existing Water Diversions:** Check if current water diversions are clogged with debris. Note their locations and the extent of the blockage.
- ♦ **Need for New Diversions:** Identify areas where water is eroding the trail and mark potential sites for new diversions.
- ♦ **Location and Documentation:** Record the location of all water diversions needing attention, e.g., "Water diversion clogged at mile 6.2."

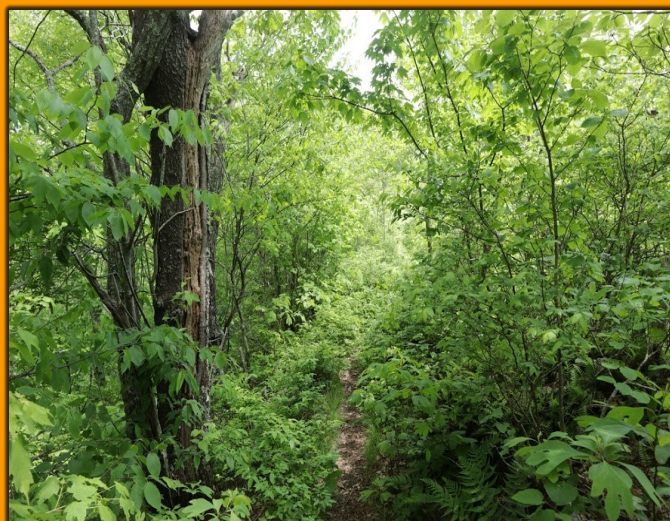


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Brushing

What to Look For:

- ♦ **Vegetation Overgrowth:** Identify sections where vegetation is encroaching on the trail, making it difficult for hikers to pass.
- ♦ **Required Tools:** Determine if the section requires a brushcutter or a string trimmer. Heavy brush may need loppers.
- ♦ **Location and Documentation:** Document the specific areas needing brushing, e.g., "Heavy brush at mile 2.5 to 3.0."



This trail is hidden with overgrowth.

Trail Blazes

What to Look For:

- ♦ **Condition of Blazes:** Check if the blazes are faded, missing or damaged.
- ♦ **Need for Refreshing:** Identify areas where blazes need to be repainted or replaced.
- ♦ **Location and Documentation:** Note the exact locations of blazes that need attention, e.g., "Blazes faded between mile 7.0 and 7.5."

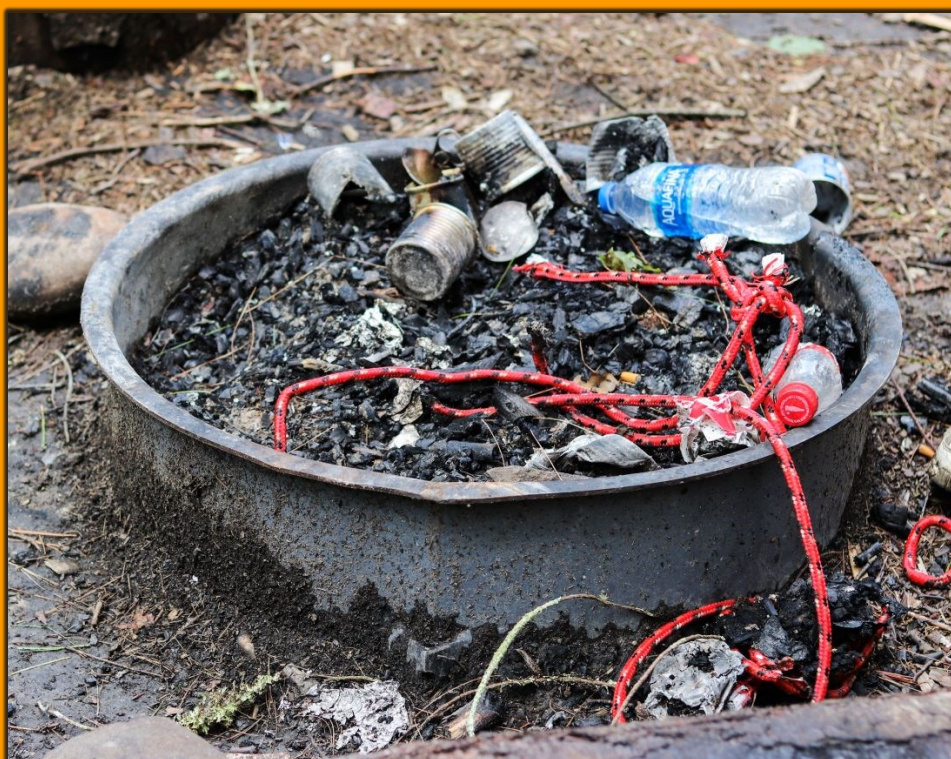


Not only do blazes lose their luster of paint but trees continue to grow, distorting the blaze.

Campsites

What to Look For:

- ♦ **General Condition:** Assess the overall condition of campsites, including the cleanliness and usability of the area.
- ♦ **Fire Rings:** Inspect fire rings for excessive ash buildup, trash, or if they need to be rebuilt.
- ♦ **Location and Documentation:** Document the condition of campsites and fire rings, e.g., "Campsite at mile 10.1 needs fire ring cleanup."



Access and Road Conditions

What to Look For:

- ♦ **Road Access:** Verify if access roads to the trailhead are passable. Note if the road is gated.
- ♦ **Road Conditions:** Assess the condition of the roads, noting any issues like heavy side brush, erosion, or obstructions.
- ♦ **Location and Documentation:** Record the condition of access roads, e.g., "Forest Service Road 73 is gated and requires high clearance vehicle."



Survey Checklist

- ♦ **Blowdowns:** Location, size, and removal effort.
- ♦ **Water Diversions:** Location, condition, and need for new diversions.
- ♦ **Brushing:** Areas needing attention and required tools.
- ♦ **Blazes:** Condition and locations needing refreshing.
- ♦ **Campsites:** Condition, especially fire rings.
- ♦ **Access:** Condition of access roads.

Conclusion

Maintaining the Benton MacKaye Trail requires attention to detail and careful documentation. By systematically surveying of a section and noting specific issues and their locations, you can prioritize tasks for our Saturday work trips. Regular maintenance trips, guided by thorough surveys, will help preserve the beauty and integrity of this iconic trail.



In toto, we had 13 creek crossings, only one of which was dicey. Even though we have had several inches of rain in the past few days, the water was not too high. Even the Bald River crossing was an easy ford.

Continued next page

There was also a massive blowdown further down the trail we had a hard time getting around. In working our way around the tree, Rick came upon a copperhead that he almost stepped on. A little urging from his hiking pole got him to slither away.



We came across an old carved blaze, which is not how we blaze today.



Not afraid of getting our feet wet! Ha!



We had only four hikers. There were two no-shows. Even with our wet feet we retained our human forms and did not morph into fungi like the ones we saw along the trail! Many thanks to Sue Robinson for shuttling us, saving us a long shuttle at the end of our hike. As we piled into our vehicle at the end of the hike the skies opened up into a deluge. We lucked out!

Nominating Committee Report for Next Year's Board of Directors

by Darcy Douglas

This year's Nominating Committee, charged with coming up with a slate of proposed officers for the 2025 year, have worked quickly and thoughtfully to convince the following to serve in these very volunteer positions! It is hoped that you will find these souls worthy of committing their time and energy to the furtherance of maintaining both our trail and our organization. Voting takes place November 2, at the Annual Meeting of the Membership.

Most of us love working on the trail. Some just love to hike the trail. But without a dedicated group of individuals willing to do the background work, we wouldn't have a trail! There is so much planning and coordination with our federal partners, managing the internet, the money, the tools, arranging ways to thank people for the work they do, and so much more. Someone has to write the guidebooks and create the maps. Someone has to teach others how to do these things.

Here is a dedicated group of BMTA members who are volunteering to do that work to keep our trail for the upcoming year. There are two other positions filled by the President, and two more filled by a vote of the Board of Directors. Thank you to each of you and to the volunteers who assisted in this process.

Committee members who have worked together to come up with this list of outstanding volunteers are Steve Cartwright, Ken Cissna, Bob Cowdrick, as an Ex Officio member, and myself as Chairperson.

Nominations will also be able to be made from the floor on November 2, 2024.

The proposed slate of officers is:

- ♦ President: Bob Cowdrick
- ♦ Vice President: Clare Sullivan
- ♦ Secretary: Jessie Hayden
- ♦ Treasurer: Lydia Burns
- ♦ Georgia Maintenance Director: Joe Cantwell
- ♦ TN/NC Maintenance Director: Patrick Ward
- ♦ Smokies Coordinator: Steve Pruett
- ♦ Membership Director: Steve Hayden
- ♦ Communications Director: Joy Forehand
- ♦ Conservation Director: Barry Allen
- ♦ Hiking Director: Kelly Motter



Reminder for those taking chainsaw training, you must have completed your first aid training before you can progress to chainsaw training.





New for 2025 BMTA PARTNERSHIPS

Beginning October 1, 2024, BMTA will offer Business, Silver, Gold, Platinum and Diamond Partnerships for the 2025 calendar year.

Each Partnership Category has a highly desirable assortment of benefits—here are a few:

- ♦ Logo on BMTA website
- ♦ Logo in *BMTA Newsletter*
- ♦ Logo on BMTA's Tool Trailer
- ♦ Full page ad in *BMTA Newsletter*
- ♦ Project/Event Sponsorship
- ♦ Sponsor Coupons for Trail Maintainers

By providing funds for maintenance projects and training, Partnerships will enable BMTA to keep the BMT safe and open for all to enjoy.

- ♦ Bridges
- ♦ Kiosks
- ♦ Tools and Equipment
- ♦ Trail Signage
- ♦ Volunteer Training
- ♦ Wilderness Summer Crews

For detailed information, individuals as well as business and corporate representatives should go to [Partner](#).

Benton MacKaye Trail Association is an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Employer Identification #58-1428009. Questions about your donation – email [Partnerships](#).

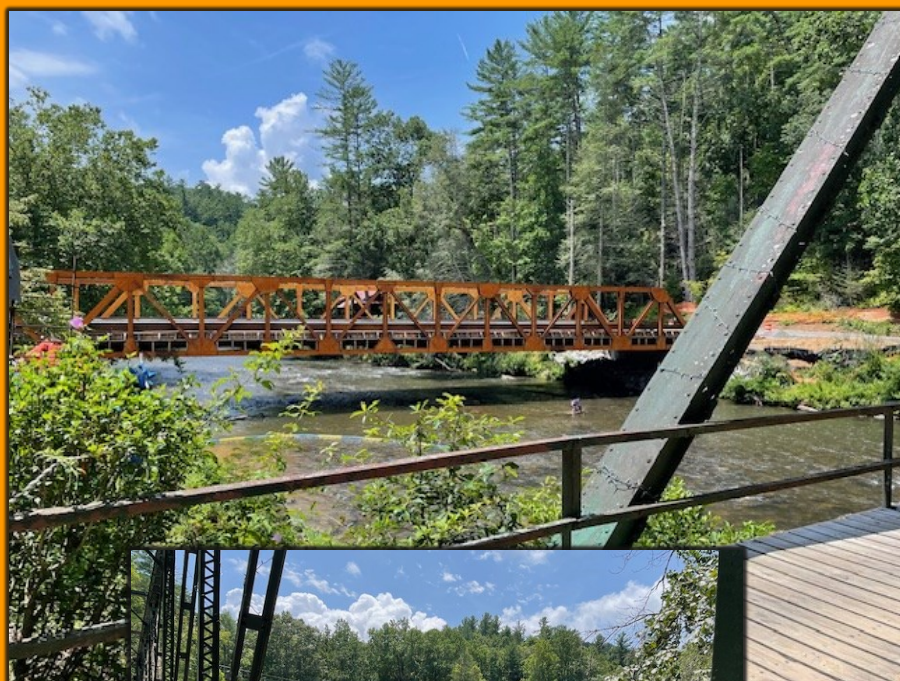
**If you receive a benefit as a result of making a contribution to a qualified organization, you can deduct only the amount of your contribution that is more than the value of the benefit you receive.*



Shallowford Bridge Nearing Completion

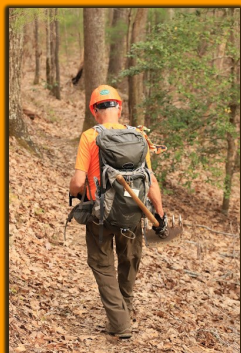
by Kathy Williams

According to onsite personnel working on the bridge, the new bridge under construction over the Toccoa River by The Iron Bridge Café is expected to be finished this September. The Benton MacKaye Trail traverses the Toccoa River at this crossing and will remain on the old Shallowford bridge which will become a pedestrian bridge upon the completion of the new bridge.



Upcoming Hikes and Maintenance Trips

by Kelly Motter, Hiking Director



August

August 10 (Saturday) BMTA Monthly Maintenance Trip.

Georgia Crew: Section 9 - Dyer Gap >> Watson Gap (tentative)

TN/NC Crew: TBA

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

Contact the TN/NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

August 16 (Friday) Emery Creek. Moderate 5 miles. This in-and-out hike is fairly easy, but with 26 stream crossings (a number up to your ankles and two around your knees) and a section of potentially slippery rock toward the beginning and again at the end make it more difficult than it otherwise would be. Holly and Emery Creeks, two lovely waterfalls, and a beautiful trail make it worth the trouble. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

August 19 (Monday) Watson Gap to Hemp Top. Moderately/strenuous 8.2 miles round trip.

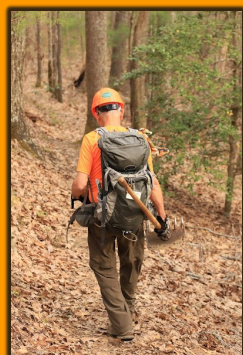
Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at sdennison@bmta.org.

September

September 2 (Monday) Yonah Mountain. This is a challenging 2.3-mile uphill with approximately 1600 feet of elevation gain. Iconic Yonah Mountain is located between Helen and Cleveland, Georgia. It is used by rock climbers from throughout the southeastern United States as well as the Army Rangers from Camp Merrill. Majestic views of up to 30 miles are a highlight of the trip up to the summit. Contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky at mpilvinsky@bmta.org.

September 6 (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.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



September 12-14 Thursday/Friday Overnight Wilderness Camping Work Trip in the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness

Where: Big Fat Gap >> Tapoco Lodge

Camping: Nichols Cove

Plan for the Trip: The total length of the trail is 6.2 miles over two days. This will be a strenuous trip using crosscut saw in the Wilderness, so anyone interested in this hike needs to **contact Dick Evans** at bmta@frontier.com so he can fully inform folks about this trip, including the meeting time and place, and other arrangements. He is looking for four additional folks.

This trip is not appropriate for a large group overnighing. There is not an opportunity for a day hiker to participate in any meaningful way.

You need NOT be crosscut certified to participate!

September 21 (Saturday) Falls Branch Falls in Tennessee. Moderate 2.4 miles with a 500' climb out of the gorge of the falls. We will drive on the Skyway to mile 22.5 at the West Rattlesnake Trailhead. From there we will hike down an old roadbed for about a mile, then steeply descend into the gorge, cross the creek (usually not requiring water shoes), then hike up to the base of the falls on a difficult trail. We will eat lunch there, then return the way we came, mostly uphill. The falls are spectacular and are about 90' high. Contact Hike leaders Rick and Brenda Harris at rharris@bmta.org or text 513-260-1184 if you plan to attend.

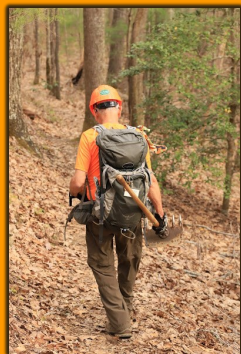


September 27 (Friday) BMT Swinging Bridge.

From Highway 60 to the Swinging Bridge and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 7.4 miles.

Lunch by the Toccoa River and BMT's iconic Suspension Bridge.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



September 28 (Saturday) BMTA Monthly Maintenance Trip. TBA

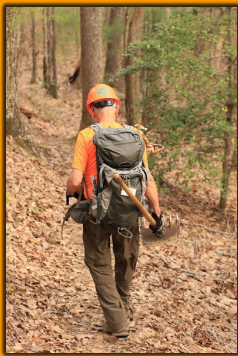
Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

Contact the TN/NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

September 30 (Monday) The Hangover. Difficult 7.5 miles. This challenging hike will start from the Wolf Laurel Trailhead in NC, about an hour's drive from the Cherokee Skyway Visitor Center. We will first climb steeply about 500' to the ridge crest to meet the Haoe Lead Trail and the BMT. We will turn right (north) and steeply descend 500' to Naked Ground, a great camping area. Then we will steeply climb up 500' to Haoe and down to the Hangover itself. On the stretch between Naked Ground and Haoe, the trail in places is often very overgrown with sticker bushes due to a fire several years ago at the same time as the Gatlinburg Fire. So, wear long pants. The views are incomparable with a 360-degree range of mountains, including the Smokies and the valley of the Little Tennessee, the Tennessee and the Cheoah Rivers. We will eat lunch at the Hangover, one of the most scenic spots in the Southern Appalachians. Warning: this is a demanding hike. Contact Hike leaders Rick and Brenda Harris at rharris@bmta.org or text 513-260-1184 if you plan to attend.

October

October 4 (Friday) Shady Falls Trailhead to Lake Blue Ridge and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 8 miles. Views of Lake Blue Ridge, including very close up during mid-hike lunch. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

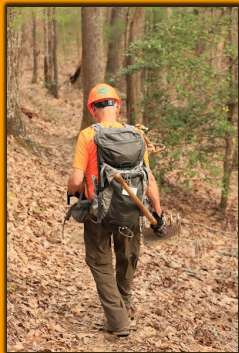
**October 12 (Saturday) BMTA Monthly Maintenance Trip. TBA**

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

Contact the TN/NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

October 18 (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 with two bridge crossings of Laurel Creek. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

October 21 (Monday) Whigg Meadow. Easy to mildly moderate 2.6 miles with a 500' climb. We will drive to the Mud Gap Trailhead of the BMT at mile 3.5 on the North Carolina side of the Skyway. We will hike on an old roadbed steadily uphill to the 5000' summit of Whigg Meadow, a large wide open bald with expansive views into the surrounding mountains. We will eat lunch there, then return. Contact Hike leaders Rick and Brenda Harris at rharris@bmta.org or text 513-260-1184 if you plan to attend.

**October 26 (Saturday) TN/NC Maintenance Trip TBA**

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

Contact the TN/NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

To access our website calendar, go [HERE](#).

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The deadline for the September Newsletter is Wednesday, September 4.
Thank you!