

http://www.bmta.org/

#### Points of Interest

Click the title to go directly to the page.

Community

Your \$\$\$ at Work

Renew

Len Foote Hike Inn

Loops of History

Stand Up Danger

Using Crosscut

**GA** Maintenance Trip

Maintenance in NC

Resolve to Adopt

Spreading the Word

**Upcoming** 

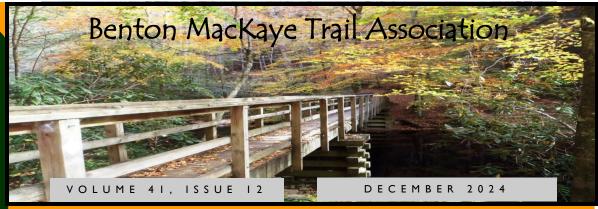


#### BMTA Officers 2024-2025

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



**BMTA Headquarters** 



# Surrounded by Community and Generosity

by Bob Cowdrick

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA). They are the driving force behind everything we accomplish, from clearing trails and leading hikes to representing us at festivals and events. Their willingness to commit their time and energy powers our mission and ensures our beloved trail remains accessible and enjoyable for generations to come.

Each year, BMTA volunteers dedicate thousands of hours to supporting our work. I've had the pleasure of meeting so many inspiring individuals along the way—students balancing school schedules, parents juggling family commitments and professionals with full-time jobs who still find time to give back. Many of these volunteers drive for hours to reach our work sites, ready to make a difference.

The longevity of our volunteers speaks volumes about the community we've built. Some have been members for years or even decades, contributing through various stages of life—schooling, new jobs, parenthood, retirement and even after moving away. Their dedication and generosity define what the BMTA stands for.

Generosity extends beyond time and labor. Our members' financial contributions power the work we do and allow us to achieve so much each year.

While it's impossible to highlight every contribution, I'd like to shine a light on a few members whose efforts often happen behind the scenes yet are critical to our success:

- ◆ Tom Atcheson is what I call a BMTA Ambassador. A long-time member, Tom organizes our festival presence, recruits members to attend and handles all the logistics. For the past three years, he has led our efforts for the popular Clean Trails Day event, spreading awareness and drawing new supporters to our mission.
- Cary Page has been a vital part of our Blaze Crew for years. Thanks to her, hikers can navigate the trail with ease, as she ensures the blazes are clear and visible. Cary also excels at publicity, faithfully sending out monthly hike announcements to local newspapers and helping us connect with the wider community.
- Chris Behrens exemplifies adaptability and dedication. Originally a trail maintainer, Chris now manages our volunteer hour database. Every time a maintainer or crew leader submits their hours, they end up in Chris's inbox. He gathers, inputs, and compiles these hours into reports that are not only invaluable to us but also greatly appreciated by the U.S. Forest Service.

• **Betty Ann Archer** is our BMTA Postmaster. When people contact the BMTA by mail at P.O. Box 6 in Cherry Log, GA, Betty Ann is the one who receives their letters. She makes weekly trips to the post office to collect, sort and file the letters we receive. This is a truly essential function that keeps our organization running smoothly.

These are just a few examples of the countless contributions our members make. While some roles are more visible, others—like organizing, reporting or handling correspondence—might not grab the spotlight but are just as crucial to our collective success.

To every volunteer and member, whether your contributions are visible or behind the scenes, thank you. You exemplify the spirit of community and generosity that sustains the BMTA and its mission. Together, we are leaving a footprint for generations to follow.



## Your \$\$\$ at Work on the BMT

## We Can't Keep the BMT in Tip-Top-Shape Without Your Help!

Keeping the Benton MacKaye Trail safe and open for everyone to enjoy depends on the physical labor of our all-volunteer crew of trail workers. These dedicated workers turn out regularly for the twice monthly work trips. Many are Section Maintainers, responsible for keeping one of BMTA's more than 80 sections in shape.

But it takes more than physical labor to maintain the trail. Trail workers need tools, materials and training to do their job.

Brushcutters Flags to identify work areas for maintenance trips

Chainsaws Gravel for parking areas

Crosscut saws Hard hats and other PPE for workers

Fire rakes Lumber and materials for viewing platforms

Handsaws Lumber for bridges, cribbing and steps

Lumber / plexiglass for kiosks

McLeods Materials and posts for signs

Pulaskis Nuts, bolts and more for the Swinging Bridge

Sling blades Paint/brushes/buckets for blazing

Weed eaters Sawyer Certification Training for Chainsaw and

First Aid/CPR Training for Hike Leaders and Trail

Crosscut Sawyers
Summer Wilderne

Workers

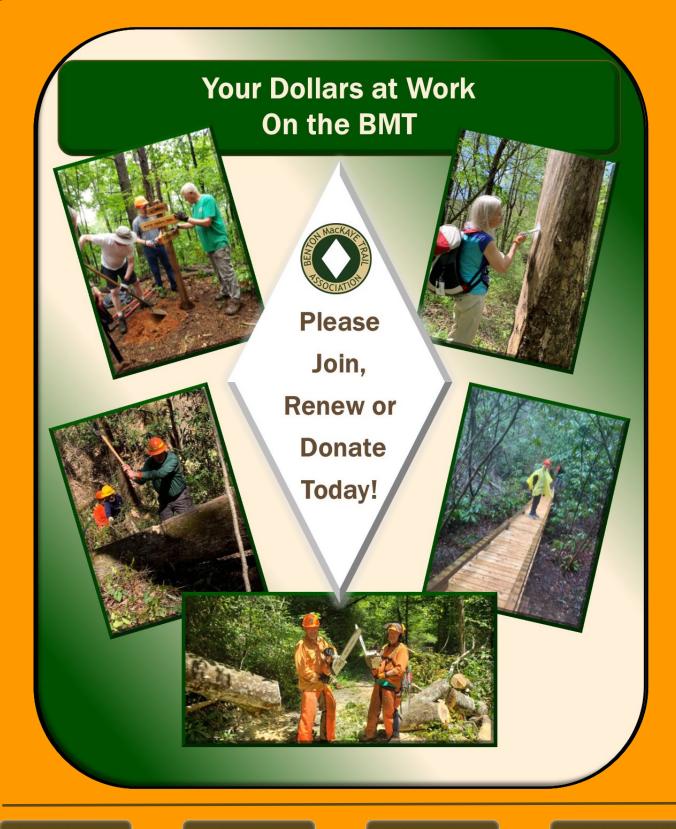
Summer Wilderness Maintenance Crew

Plus, with just 15 miles of the trail not on public land, BMTA must be ready to act when a parcel of land that would be valuable for the trail's corridor comes on the market – BMTA's Land Acquisition Fund was established for this very purpose.

#### —This Is Where YOU Come In—

YOUR membership fees, donations and partnerships provide the funds for *ALL* of the above. Please join or renew your <u>membership</u>. Consider a <u>donation</u> for the <u>Land Acquisition Fund</u> or support BMTA's projects through our new <u>Partnership Program</u>.

The 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 membership or donation should be directed to: Steve Hayden, Membership Director, <a href="mailto:bmtamembership@bmta.org">bmtamembership@bmta.org</a>.



**MEMBERSHIP** 

**DONATE** 

**DONATE LAF** 

**PARTNERSHIPS** 

## BMTA at Len Foote Hike Inn February 25 Reserve by January 25

The Len Foote Hike Inn has been reserved for the BMTA on Tuesday, February 25, 2025.

Hikers will need to call the Hike Inn Reservation number and reserve a room in their own name, informing them they are with the BMTA. For information about the Len Foote Hike Inn go <u>HERE</u>.

#### Reservations cannot be made online for the BMTA held rooms. Rooms will be half-price.

Reservations must be made by January 25, 2025. After January 24, 2025, unreserved rooms will be available to anyone. There are only 20 rooms at the Len Foote Hike Inn.

- ◆ Total for two people in a room is \$120.75.
- ◆ Total for one person in a room is \$89.13.
- Phone number to call is 706-344-1547 Mon- Friday 8:30 AM-2:30 PM.





# **Loops of Trail History**

by Kathy Williams with photos courtesy of Liberty Murray and Kathy Williams

Recently I accompanied my daughter Liberty, along with her group of veterinarians and pharmacy friends, on a retreat hike. She had called me asking where she could take the group that would be close to the Ellijay area where they were staying. She wanted a waterfall and an overlook view. They had time for two hikes. One day a short one the next day a longer one.

I suggested Amicalola Falls for the waterfall and then I thought about how they might enjoy hiking on both the AT and the BMT. That would give them two extraordinary views and also the chance to put their feet on the two premier trails in the southeast. By going on the AT/BMT Loop Trail they could brag that they visited the Southern Terminus of both trails.

I then thought hmm. Maybe I can talk George Owen into being the guide and persuade him to share the history of these two special trails. George graciously consented even though he had been guiding extensively at the BMT Annual Meeting just a few days before.

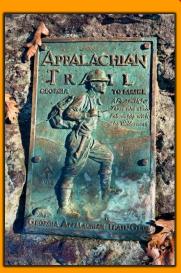
When the group went to Amicalola Falls, lo and behold they ran into George who was leading a hike there! Liberty had previously met George and recognized him.

The next day I joined the group as sweep, and we headed to the top of Springer Mountain. George would stop along the way, telling of the history behind each trail. Liberty and I joked with him about his "design" of the Duncan Ridge Trail. I also warned the group about George's mileage sometimes being on the extra-long side.



At the top we had great views from Springer and the group enjoyed the plaques and the special rock drawer where they could sign the book kept inside. Next, we headed to the Benton MacKaye southern terminus and then on to Owen Vista. We had a brief stop at the Vista and were joined by another group of hikers who knew of George and wanted pictures with him. He must be a rock star!!





**AT Plaque** 



The view from Springer Mountain.

Rock drawer.



The group at the Benton MacKaye Plaque. There we learned more about Benton MacKaye and the efforts to get the plaque placed on Springer Mountain.



Owen Vista! The perfect place for lunch!



George regaled us with the discussions regarding how to name this spectacular view. Some in the BMTA wanted it called Owen's Overlook and during the lighthearted banter George told them that after he died they could call it Cissna's Dropoff!! Ha ha ha!!! A George truism to be sure!



George pointed out trail blazes and their importance in guiding hikers. This BMT blaze had been recently painted.

As we trekked someone asked about the pungent odor that had wafted across the trail. George said it came from a particular plant that he could not remember the name of at that time. He did promise to show it to us. Suddenly George stopped and said, "Galax! The plant that is odorous is galax and it rimes with ex-lax!" HA! We really like that memory link! Thank you, George, for your knowledge, your humor and your time!



Another charming feature of the AT/BMT Loop Trail is that you also traverse some small streams deep in the forest. This trail has it all!



Galax!



Fun fungi! Steps to Fairyland?



#### **BMTA PARTNERSHIPS**

Help BMTA preserve, protect and maintain the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Become a BMTA Business, Silver, Gold, Platinum or Diamond Partner today!

Go to Partnerships to view the details.

Employer Identification #58-1428009.

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

# Stand Up Danger

by Joe Cantwell

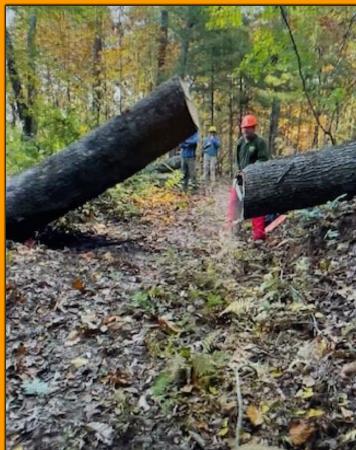
Steve Dennison, Section Maintainer, reported a large tree blocking the trail about one mile south of Highway 68 on Section 14a. The butt log was too large for him to attempt to cut. As part of a Tennessee Maintenance Trip on October 26, the saw crew of Barry Allen, Joe Cantwell, Ken Cissna and Brian Trinkle hiked to the tree. Barry had his 24-inch blade on the Stihl chainsaw. The rest of us carried wedges, an ax, a peavy and a Katanaboy hand saw.

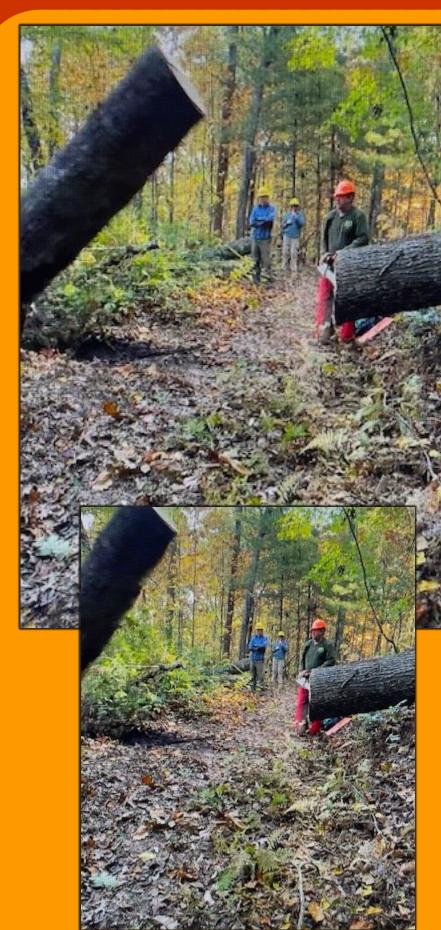
The large red oak, estimated at 30-inch diameter lay across the trail with a large rootball attached hanging on a very steep downhill side and a massive crown with full foliage extending about 80-foot on the uphill side. The butt log laid across an approximately 20-foot old log road, supported on both sides of the roadbed leaving about three feet of daylight under the log on the uphill side. The crew had an excellent clear work area.

Now the fun part was determining the binds involved. Joe thought it was a bottom bind so it would open at the top and would stand up. In other words, the rootball had enough weight to lift the butt log and settle back into the original rootball hole. Barry was quite sure of this but cautioned that due to the massive weights involved the log might initially drop down and require a second cut to clear the trail, at which time it might stand up. Barry also pointed out that if it was a stand-up situation the more weight he could add to the butt end, the more it would slow down the velocity of the stand-up.

A wedge cut was made at the top of the log in the event the log dropped. Then Barry made a bore cut with the 24-inch blade barely making it through the log by one inch.







Next the down cut continued slowly trying to determine the actual bind.

As soon as Barry sensed a bottom bind developing the cut was terminated.

We were now sure it was going to stand up.

Next, we reviewed the situations that make a stand-up dangerous.

Barry had a flat clear area so he could position the saw off his right hip and his body would be completely clear of the butt log if it stood up rapidly or moved towards him.

The saw cut moved back to the top and as predicted the kerf opened slightly. Barry connected the top cut to the bore cut and movement started. Two seconds elapsed and the 10-foot butt log was standing up. The trail was clear in one Barry cut!

We all learned the value of formulating plans that envision situations that may not be obvious.



To view the video go <u>HERE</u>.

# Jacks River - Using Crosscut! Photos courtesy of Art Kolberg and Steve Pruett



The Steves! Pruett and Dennison!

Ray Laws and Art Kolberg begin the cut.



**Bob Cowdrick and Ray Laws bearing down.** 



Wedging and then cutting from below demand concentration and focus.



Teamwork contributes to success.
Ray Laws and Kelly Motter bear down as Art Kolberg observes.

# Georgia Maintenance Trip

by Joe Cantwell

On November 9, Section 12 between Daly Gap and Double Springs Gap provided 17 Maintainers an exhausting day of trail work. Three crosscut crews, one swing blade crew and one tread crew spent the day in the Cohutta Wilderness.

Barry Allen, Shane Morrison, Kenny Martin and Bob Nelson hiked in 3.7 miles to a group of three blow-downs. One tree completely obliterated the trail. At first it looked rather routine but turned into a long complex process with three large serious spring poles tucked under it. The spring poles were safely removed and the task of cutting through the massive top proceeded safely. A group of four hikers watched the process before continuing their camping trip to Big Frog Mountain. They thanked the crew and the BMTA for their efforts.

The crew, on its return trip, detoured down Penitentiary Trail for seven tenths of a mile to cut out two more blowdowns. Their long day ended after hiking over nine miles.

Joe Cantwell, Byron Coker and Dale Fiedler made the 10.5-mile round trip, working between Hemp Top and Double Springs Gap to clear four blowdowns. The same four hikers that watched Barry's crew made it to them just as the last branch was removed to give them a clear walkthrough. Again, the hikers passed on a sincere thank you.

Portions of the Jacks River Trail and the Penitentiary Trail have been informally adopted by the BMTA as an ongoing cooperative effort with the Forest Service. Within the first mile of the Jacks River Trail, the crosscut team of Bob Cowdrick, Ray Laws, Art Kolberg and Kelly Motter removed 11 blowdowns. The trail was also trimmed back to make it much easier to traverse.

Daphne Martin, Laurie Schatz and Kathy Gushwa formed the swing blade and lopper team. They worked between Penitentiary and Hemp Top. The trail looked like a bushhog had mowed it when their arms gave out. Great effort doing a tough job!

The final crew worked on tread repair on Section 12b. Steve Dennison, the Section Maintainer, along with Bill Cox and Steve Pruett did work that had been on Steve's wish list for over a year.

The combined efforts of these volunteers working 160 hours resulted in 24 blowdowns removed, 120 feet of tread repair and 7000 feet of brushing. Thanks for making the BMT the showcase trail of the Forest Service Districts in this area!

#### Be Aware of the Symptoms of Hypothermia!

- Shivering
- Slurred speech
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Weak pulse

- Lack of coordination
- Drowsiness/low energy
- Confusion/memory loss
- Loss of consciousness

Hypothermia occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can produce heat. This is a medical emergency that can cause total failure of your cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Seek help immediately.

# Maintenance in North Carolina

Photos courtesy of Clare Sullivan, Elizabeth Weikert, Rick Harris



Rick Harris and Ed Sullivan prepare to crosscut.



Cut is done so take a break!



Brenda Harris assists.



**Crosscutting keeps one warm!** 



Craig Gustavson has the wedge in place.





Before After

# Resolve to Adopt a BMT Section in 2025

Are you looking for a resolution that will give you meaning, purpose and help you get rid of those holiday pounds? Then consider becoming a Benton MacKaye Section Maintainer. There are a few sections available for adoption that you can choose from HERE. Below are two that are available.



Section 16a offers so much. This section is famous for its part of the trail affectionately known as "The Heart of Darkness." There are stunning mountain views that reward you at every turn. Plus, you have bragging rights about "The Heart of Darkness!"



Section 16b has Bald River Falls. A feast for your eyes and ears!

So take up a challenge in 2025 to better your life and help us "leave a footprint for generations to follow."

# Spreading the Word About the Work We Do

by Joy Forehand

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) has new signs that will be placed at the trailheads whenever a work trip is in progress on that section of the BMT.

The signs let people know there's a volunteer trail crew ahead and invite passing hikers to 'Join Us'. The convenient QR Code will take the hiker to BMTA's website where they can learn more about the trail and what we do.



#### You Can Spread the Word Too

Whenever you're visiting with family and friends, let them know what it takes to maintain the trail and the satisfaction that comes from helping to "leave a footpath for generations to follow".

If they're not familiar with the BMT, invite them to check it out. If they're new to hiking, invite them to join us on one of our sponsored hikes.

# **Upcoming**

by Kelly Motter, Hiking Director

#### **December**



**December 14 (Saturday) BMTA Maintenance Trips Two locations:** 

**BMTA GA** Maintenance Trip. Section 9a-b-c – Dyer Gap >> Watson Gap Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at <a href="maintenance">bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org</a>.

**BMTA TN** Maintenance Trip. Section 11d – Hwy 221 SB for 2 miles and Section 12d – Lost Creek Campground SB Contact the BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org.

**December 20** (Friday) Fightingtown Creek #3. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 4 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at <a href="mailto:kcissna@bmta.org">kcissna@bmta.org</a>.

**December 27** (Friday) Boyd's Gap to Thunder Rock Campground. Moderate 6 miles, mostly downhill. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at <a href="mailto:rcollinson@bmta.org">rcollinson@bmta.org</a>.

### **January**

**January 1** (Wednesday) BMT/AT Upper Loop at Springer Mountain. Bring in New Year's Day with a great hike to an iconic mountain! Hike from Big Stamp Gap to Springer Mountain on the BMT. See the southern terminus of the BMT and the southern terminus of the AT. Then follow the AT north to the intersection with the BMT and return to Big Stamp Gap. A moderate hike of about 5 miles. The 1st mile and a half is uphill. Contact Hike Leader Mike Pilvinsky at mpilvinsky@bmta.org.

January 4 (Saturday) Three Forks to Toccoa River Bridge. This joint club hike (BMTA and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club) begins at Three Forks and continues for 9.2 miles to the iconic Suspension Bridge over the Toccoa River. The hike is considered strenuous as we pass Long Creek Falls and go over Big John Dick Mountain ending at the Toccoa River Bridge parking area. Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at kmotter@bmta.org.

**January 6** (Monday) Old Copper Road Trail. Easy/Moderate 4.6 miles. Fairly smooth and flat. Built by Cherokee laborers in 1851 to haul copper from Copperhill to Cleveland, Tennessee. Goes back to the current put-in for the Upper Ocoee raft trips.

Contact Hike Leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan at csullivan@bmta.org

January 8 (Wednesday) Piney Knob Rhodo-Coaster Trail. Moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.



January 11 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

**January 20** (Monday) BMT: Three Forks to No Name Gap and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) Moderate 4.7 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at <a href="mailto:kcissna@bmta.org">kcissna@bmta.org</a>.

**January 20** (Monday) Brush Creek Loop. Moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at <a href="mailto:rcollinson@bmta.org">rcollinson@bmta.org</a>.

January 24 (Friday) BMT Wilscot Gap Old Dial Road. Strenuous 11.2 miles. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at <a href="mailto:sdennison@bmta.org">sdennison@bmta.org</a>.

January 25 Deadline for Reservations for the BMTA at The Len Foote Hike Inn on Tuesday, February 25, 2025. Reservations cannot be made online for the BMTA held rooms. Rooms will be half-price. Call 706-344-1547 Monday- Friday 8:30 AM-2:30 PM.



**January 25** (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA Contact the BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at <a href="maintenance-bmta.org">bmta.org</a>.

## **February**

**February 1** (Saturday) Toccoa River Bridge to Skeenah Gap on the BMT.

This joint club hike (BMTA and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club) begins at the iconic Suspension Bridge and continues for 10.2 miles to Skeenah Gap. This very strenuous hike begins by going over Tooni Mountain then Wallalah and finally Rhodes Mountain to Skeenah Gap. The hike requires a shuttle. Contact Hike Leader Kelly Motter at kmotter@bmta.org.

**February 3** (Monday) Hike to Buck Bald. Enjoy this short uphill hike on the BMT to a 360-degree view of Buck Bald. Hike starts at Hwy 68. Total hike length is 1.8 miles. Contact Hike Leader Clare Sullivan at csullivan@bmta.org

**February 3** (Monday) Two Loops of BMT/AT from Three Forks southbound. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

**February 5** (Wednesday) Trails of Jack Rabbit. Hike is 5-6 miles of moderate trails outside Hayesville, NC. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at <a href="mailto:reollinson@bmta.org">reollinson@bmta.org</a>.



**February 8** (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

**February 12** (Wednesday) Thunder Rock Express to BMT to Thunder Rock Campground. This moderate hike of 5 miles is located in the Ocoee area of TN. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at <a href="mailto:rcollinson@bmta.org">rcollinson@bmta.org</a>.

**February 12** (Wednesday) GA 60 Wilscot Gap to GA 60 across from Swinging Bridge FS Road. Strenuous 10.9 miles. Hike requires shuttle. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at <a href="mailto:sdeenison@bmta.org">sdennison@bmta.org</a>.



**February 22** (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA Contact the BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at <a href="maintenance">bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org</a>

**February 25** (Tuesday) BMTA at the Len Foote Hike Inn. From Amicalola Falls State Park this is a moderate 5-mile hike taking from two to four hours. Hikers are treated to dinner and breakfast. More information to come. You have to reserve your room by January 25. See <a href="mailto:page-5">page-5</a>.

#### To access our website calendar, go **HERE**.



Mr Bones wishes everyone Happy Holidays!!!



The Grinch gave a BMTA Membership to Tiny Sasquatch as a Christmas present!

**MEMBERSHIP** 

DONATE

DONATE LAF

PARTNERSHIPS

TRAIL STORE

The deadline for the January Newsletter is Wednesday, January 1. Thank you!