



<http://www.bmta.org/>

Points of Interest

Click the title to go directly to the page.

[BMT Construction](#)

[Giving](#)

[Tipton Inducted](#)

[President's Column](#)

[TN/NC Maintenance](#)

[Tunnel Bypass Trail](#)

[Enormity of Joyce Kilmer](#)

[Resolve](#)

[More Annual Meeting](#)

[Lakeshore Trail](#)

[Nowhere](#)

[George Requests](#)

[Hike Inn](#)

[Thank you!](#)

[Noland Creek](#)

[Lonesome Pine](#)

[Mr Bones](#)

[Upcoming](#)

BMTA Officers 2025-2026

- President: Bob Cowdrick
- Vice President: Kelly Wentworth
- Secretary: Jessie Hayden
- Treasurer: Suzy Mayes
- GA M/D: Joe Cantwell
- TN/NC M/D: Patrick Ward
- Smokies Coord: Steve Pruett
- Hiking Director: Ray Laws
- Membership: Byron Coker
- Communications: Joy Forehand
- Conservation: Darcy Douglas
- Past President: Ken Cissna
- Store: Sue Ricker
- Newsletter: Kathy Williams
- State Rep GA: Liz Henderson
- State Rep TN/NC: Clare Sullivan



BMTA Headquarters



The Construction of the BMT Through TN and NC

by Richard Harris

Using information provided by Ken Jones, Clayton Pannell and Otis Pannell

Photos courtesy of Joy Forehand and Rick and Brend Harris

Ken Jones was asked to present the history of the construction of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) from the Ocoee River to the border of the Smokies for the Annual Meeting of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) at the banquet Saturday, November 1, 2025. However, Ken ended up in the hospital at Piedmont Atlanta and was thus unable to attend the meeting. I was asked to fill in for him. Clayton Pannell was also unable to attend. Therefore, I interviewed Ken by phone, and I had Otis Pannell interview his dad, Clayton. This article is derived from these two sources. Both Ken and Clayton are considered to be the fathers of the BMT through Tennessee and North Carolina, as George Owen is considered to be the father of the BMT in Georgia.

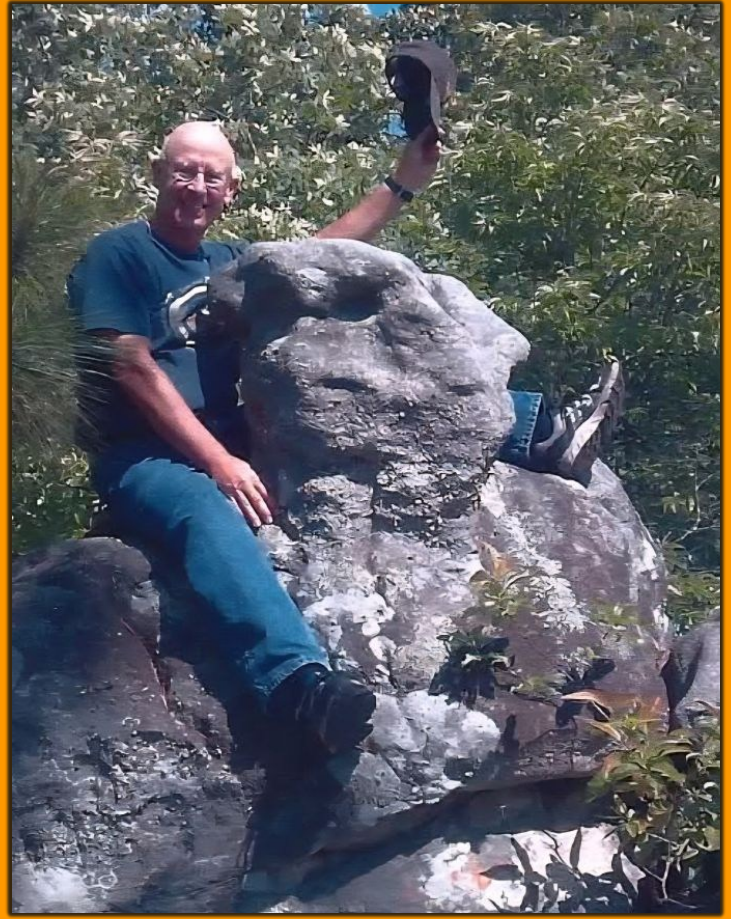
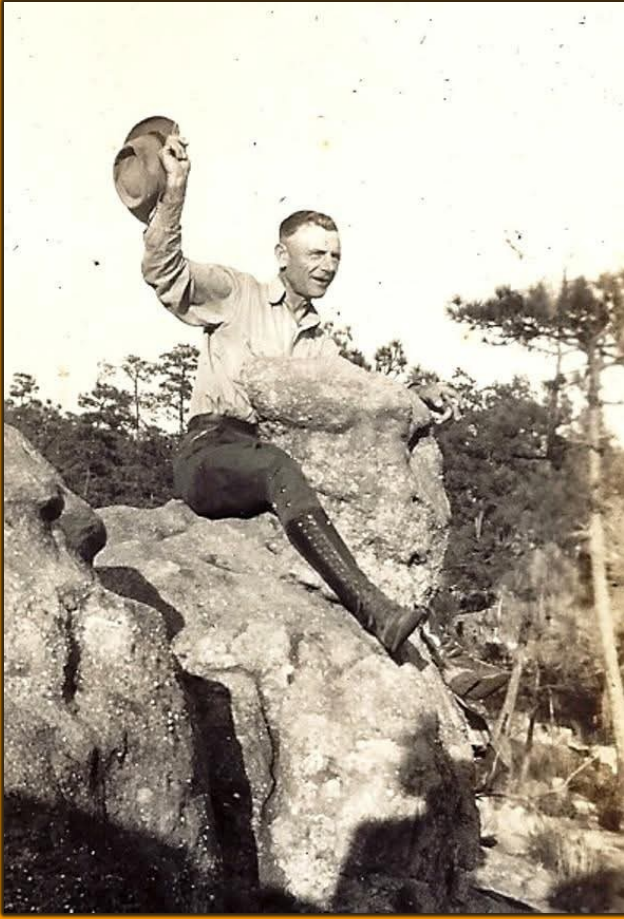
Background on Ken Jones and Clayton Pannell

Ken was born in Centreville, Alabama near the Talladega National Forest. He says about his childhood, "I loved hiking from a very young age. I always enjoyed walks in the woods with my dad and grandfather. My grandfather was the park manager of Oak Mountain State Park in Alabama". During his working career he says he "spent occasional weekends just bushwhacking in areas around home". He then attended the University of Alabama, obtaining a degree in mechanical engineering. Moving to Chattanooga and then later Athens, Tennessee, he worked for TVA until the age of 46. Part of this time was as a system engineer at the Watts Bar Nuclear Power Plant.

In 1996 he joined the Hiwassee Hiking Club in Athens, Tennessee. Clayton Pannell was in that club and was also the President of BMTA. Clayton got him involved in trail maintenance in the Cherokee National Forest and later on the BMT. His first work trip was on the BMT on Big Frog using a crosscut saw.



Ken Jones with his trusty tools!



Ken Jones riding that rock! The rock remains after many years and so does Ken!

Clayton Pannell was in the army from 1958 to 1960. He did basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and served at Fort Rucker, Alabama. He was in the 8305th Aerial Combat Reconnaissance. Clayton was a BMTA member since the mid-1980s and was once the maintainer for the section from Dyers Gap to Watson Gap. After retirement, Clayton did section hikes of the Appalachian Trail (AT) in one-week segments for several years with a few other friends, and Robert Owenby was in that group. In 1995 he thru hiked the AT. After returning from his AT thru hike, he was elected President of the BMTA. He took this position in order to have the authority to represent the club in negotiations and route proposals with the forest service. He thought as President he would have the best chance to see the BMT completed through Tennessee.



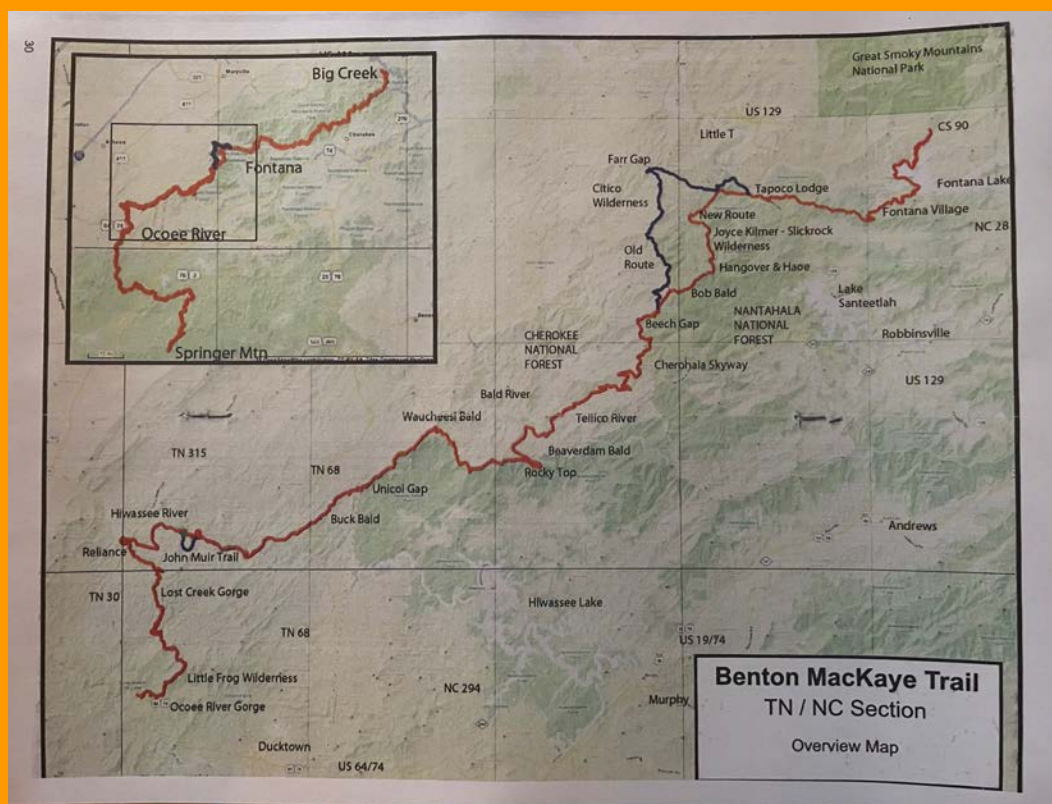
Clayton Pannell

He joined every club he could find that might give him contacts and resources in this endeavor. He joined the Hiwassee Hiking Club, the Cherokee Hiking Club, the Sequoia Hiking Club, the Chattanooga Hiking Club and the Tennessee Overhill Association. Clayton recruited Ken Jones, Robert Owenby (whom he met on his AT thru hike) and Gary Smith to help in his quest to complete the BMT through Tennessee and North Carolina.

BMT Design and Construction through Tennessee and North Carolina

In 1996 the BMT stopped at the Ocoee River. Clayton, who at the time was President of the BMTA, asked Ken to help him route and construct the BMT from the Ocoee River to the border of the Smoky Mountains National Park. Clayton had access to the TVA quadrangle maps for the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests. The national forest rangers asked the two of them to map out three possible alternative routes. This required two years of hard labor — hiking on poorly maintained trails, old forest roads and logging roads. Hundreds of blowdowns and heavy brush impeded their progress, especially following the devastation from the Blizzard of 1993 and Hurricane Opel in 1995. Also, trying to figure out how best to cross the Hiwassee, Tellico and Little Tennessee Rivers was a major challenge. In addition, the USFS did not want them to cross any of the sensitive balds, creating another set of problems and obstacles.

Ken and Clayton made their own clinometers. Ken's consisted of a plumb bob and a plastic school child's retractor and Clayton's was made of wood, a bubble level and an inspection mirror. Ken and Clayton presented their optional routes to the USFS in 1998. The preferred route involved 85 miles of trail which included 22 miles of new trail (seven miles of new sidehill, 15 miles on old logging roads). The next step was for the USFS to choose the route they preferred and to perform an environmental assessment with NEPA for rare botanicals and archeological artifacts. It took five years to complete the NEPA/EA. Delays were due to other priorities within the USFS, including dealing with a lawsuit by the Southern Environmental Legal Center over failure of the USFS to implement and monitor rare plant indicator species. Also, some folks in the USFS were concerned that the original trail names would be lost once the trail was designated as the BMT. The USFS was assured by Ken that the old names would continue, with maps and signs showing the old names as well as the name of the BMT, which had been designated as Trail #2 (Trail #1 being the Appalachian Trail). The archeological survey was done by Quintin Bass. The first botanical survey was also contracted by the BMTA. Due to the five-year delay since the first botanical survey, it was necessary to repeat the botanical survey and this was conducted by Jamie Donaldson, who was highly allergic to poison ivy. This complicated the survey!



The route as it is today.

The environmental assessment was approved in December 2003. The initial NEPA cost of \$5000 was paid for by the BMTA, though the USFS paid for the second botanical survey.

While the EA was in progress, Ken Jones and Clayton Pannell along with Gary Smith and Robert Owenby went out regularly to clear the already established trails along the proposed BMT route. This was a major undertaking since the trails had seen little maintenance since the Blizzard of '93 and Hurricane Opel. Also, the five-mile route through the TAPOCO (Tallasse Power Company) property between the Nantahala National Forest and the Smokies along the Little Tennessee River was quickly approved by TAPOCO. The four of them cleared this route in 1998 prior to the USFS EA approval.

One week after the approval of the EA, on December 23, 2003, the four of them began working every Monday, Wednesday and Friday on the trail. Also, BMTA work trips were carried out every month. The first area to be worked on was the segment along Brookshire Creek and up to Sugar Mountain, since this area was to be designated as the Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in March 2004. The goal was to build the trail through this area using chainsaws and gas-powered brush cutters prior to the WSA designation going into effect. A big National Trails Day Event was held in June, 2004 with over 50 people attending. The president of the American Hiking Society was present to start the trail construction event.

Clayton remembers the following about his work trips, "Building new trail was always slow. It had to be flagged and grade shot. Then we would come back with chainsaws and weed eaters to clear the route and then the fun began. Time to sidehill the trail, digging day after day. It doesn't take many workdays of sidehilling to appreciate the miles and miles of digging that was done by all the volunteers that came out, rolled up their sleeves and started swinging their Pulaskis. Ken logged everyone's hours during this time, and everyone maintained their own tools."

Robert Owenby is considered by Clayton and Ken to be an unsung hero. Clayton said he worked as much as the others but was never in the spotlight. Clayton said Robert sidehilled the prettiest trail he ever saw. He worked tirelessly for years to see the BMT completed. In an odd week when Ken and Clayton couldn't work, Robert pulled a camper to Low Gap and worked on the trail all week by himself.

The construction and signing of the entire trail were completed by March 2005, just 15 months later. The last work trip finished at Sandy Gap and was celebrated with cake and champagne. The official Grand Opening of the BMT through Tennessee and North Carolina was held at Mud Gap along the Cherochala Skyway in July 2005 with a vine-cutting ceremony conducted by Ken and Clayton. Present were Tom Speaks (Forest Supervisor of the Cherokee National Forest) and other USFS and NPS dignitaries.

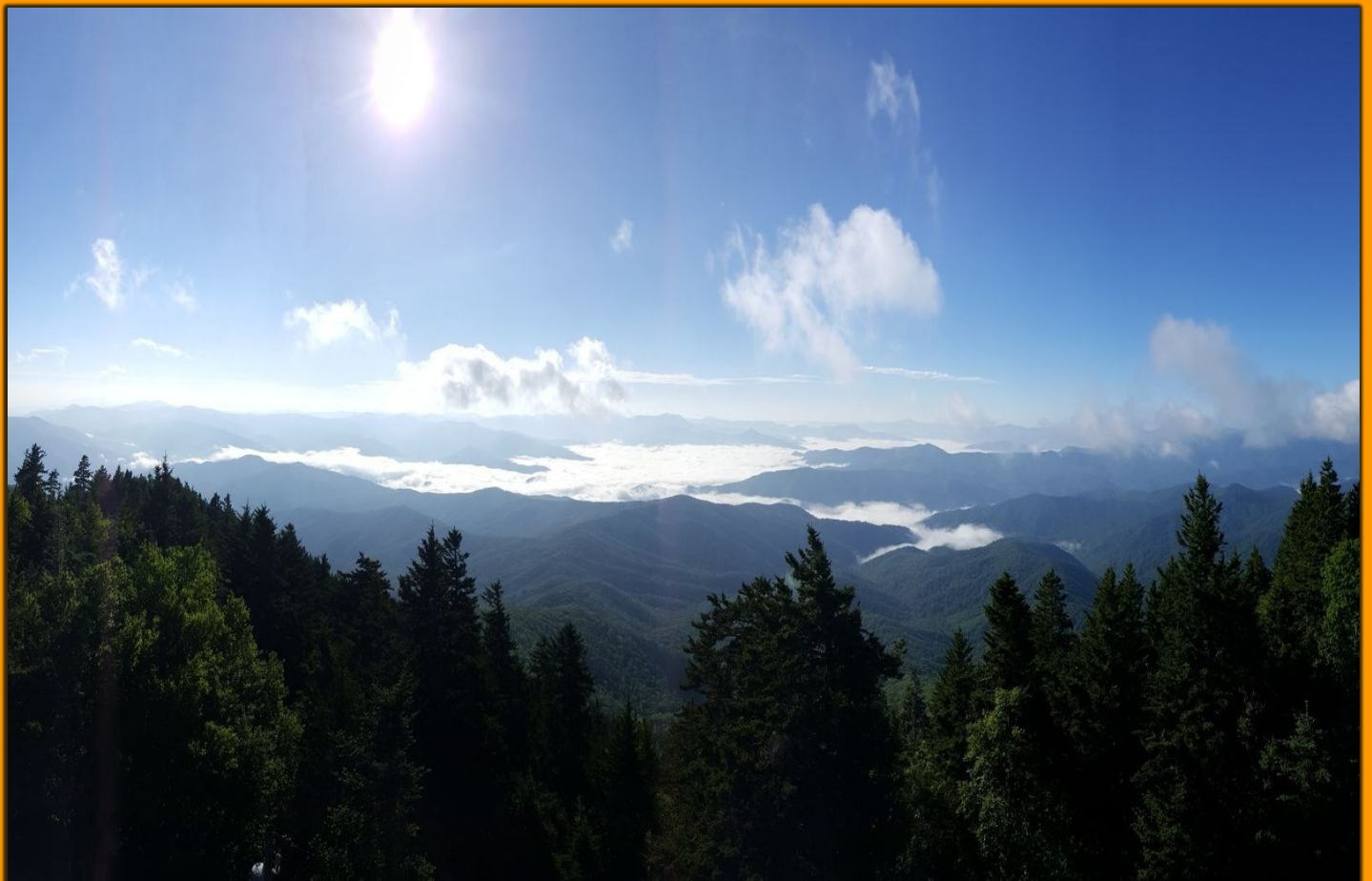


Reroutes after 2005

Since the opening of the trail in 2005, three significant reroutes have been accomplished.

- ◆ One was on the John Muir section of the trail along the Hiwassee River. The USFS asked that the trail be rerouted from Towee Creek over the ridge and back down to the river's edge to avoid a section which frequently flooded and made the trail impassable or very dangerous to navigate upstream from the Appalachia Powerhouse. The first attempt on this reroute had hikers wading across Towee Creek. Later, the trail was rerouted again to avoid this sometimes-dangerous creek crossing.
- ◆ The second was to avoid the Tapoco area from the "Fugitive" (Cheoah) Dam up to Neals Gap which required a three-mile walk along the very busy and dangerous US129 known as the Tail of the Dragon between Deals Gap and the Twenty Mile Creek Trailhead. This reroute brought the trail to Tapoco Lodge, then along Yellow Creek Mountain to Fontana Village, completely avoiding this dangerous road walk.
- ◆ The third reroute was to take the trail from Beech Gap up over Bob Bald, Naked Ground, Haeo and the Hangover, rather than the old route along the Fodderstack, Stiffknee and Slickrock Trails. The old route also required a wade across Slickrock Creek which often was high and dangerous. The new route was much more scenic going over Bob Bald and by the Hangover.

The current route of the BMT from the Ocoee River to Fontana Dam is now 102.6 miles long and traverses some of the most gorgeous regions of the Appalachian Mountains. The trail is challenging but well worth the effort.





'Tis the Season for Giving

Join, Renew or Donate Today!

YOUR MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR BMTA TO PRESERVE, PROTECT AND MAINTAIN THE BMT

MAINTENANCE

- ◆ Silky saws, chainsaws and crosscut saws to remove blowdowns
- ◆ Brushcutters, swing blades and loppers to keep brush and briars from blocking the trail
- ◆ Pulaskis, fire rakes and McLeods to keep the tread in shape
- ◆ Lumber and gravel for cribbing, bridges and step projects

TRAINING

- ◆ Sawyer Certification classes teach our volunteers how to use the saws safely and properly.
- ◆ First Aid Certification keeps our volunteers up-to-date on what to do in the event of an injury or illness while on the trail.

LAND ACQUISITION FUND (LAF)

- ◆ These monetary reserves make it possible for BMTA to be ready to act when a piece of property valuable to the trail corridor comes on the market.

YOUR generosity makes maintaining the BMT possible!

THANK YOU!

It only takes a few minutes, do it today!

[JOIN](#) [RENEW](#) [DONATE](#) [DONATE LAF](#)



Ron Tipton Inducted into Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame

Long-time Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) member Ron Tipton was among the honorees inducted into the Appalachian Trail Museum's Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony for the 15th class of the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame was held November 22, 2025, in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. BMTAer Marty Dominy traveled from Georgia to West Virginia for Ron's induction



Ron behind his wife Rita and other friends on the C&O Canal towpath. Marty Dominy is in the red jacket in the back.

Tipton has been deeply involved with the Appalachian Trail (AT) for almost 50 years. He joined the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club in 1974 and maintained a section of the AT for more than 20 years. In the mid-1970's, he was a staff member of the House Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee where he worked with the House National Park Subcommittee to draft and promote the 1978 amendments to the National Trails System Act.

After thru hiking the AT, Tipton prepared a report documenting high priority sections of the AT corridor to be acquired and protected. As the National Parks Program Director for The Wilderness Society, Tipton worked with other AT advocates to secure a significant increase in annual appropriations for the AT land acquisition program. He also was one of the founding members of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association (ALDHA).

Tipton became President & CEO of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) in 2013, serving in that position until he retired in 2017. His accomplishments as the leader of the ATC included creating a new initiative for preserving the larger landscape surrounding the AT as well as significant increases in the ATC's funding and staff.

President's Column

by Bob Cowdrick

Knowing When to Turn Around

I recently ventured out on the BMT to survey trail work needed on an isolated section. The plan was simple: five miles out and five miles back. At two miles per hour, it should have been an easy five-hour trip. But hikes don't always go as planned. As the sky darkened and a distant rumble rolled across the ridge, it quickly became *turn-around theory* time.

Uncertainty is a big part of turn-around theory—knowing when to make the call and head back to your starting point. It's never easy, especially when you're trying to accomplish a goal: completing that five-mile route, cutting out those six trees, clearing the ten water diversions, or enjoying lunch at the scenic vista you've been thinking about all morning.

Before any hike, I mentally review the factors that guide my own turn-around decisions. You may find these helpful the next time you face a tough choice on the trail.

1. Turnaround Time

I always have a clear turnaround time in mind. If I'm not at a certain point by a specific hour, the attempt is over—no questions asked—and I head back to the trailhead.

2. Gear at Hand

Preparation is essential. I make sure I have not only the gear needed for the day but also enough to get through an unplanned night out if necessary. Getting lost or injured are two scenarios where this matters most.

3. Weather

Weather is the number one reason I sometimes turn around. An outlook calling for afternoon storms or worsening conditions can quickly make continuing forward a poor—and dangerous—choice.

4. Trail Conditions

Trail conditions play a major role in decision-making. Wet rocks, steep slopes, muddy bogs and multiple stream crossings can slow travel and raise the risk of injury. When obstacles stack up, that turnaround time approaches faster than expected.

In the End: Judgment

Any hike or work-trip leader will tell you that technical and interpersonal skills matter, but sound judgment may matter most of all. Poor judgment kills.

I encourage all of us to practice turn-around theory in situations where the decision is easy, so the habit becomes second nature. Why? Because making a timely, confident turnaround can be the choice that keeps you out of trouble—and gets you safely home.



TN/NC Maintenance Trip

by Patrick Ward

On Saturday, 11/22/2025 while anticipating the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday 10 volunteers from far and wide gathered at Tapoco Lodge to work three sections of the Benton MacKaye Trail.

A crew of Steve Hayden, Daphne Martin and Kathy Gushwa worked on Section 18e clearing 12 blowdowns and lopping the entire section from Tapoco Lodge to Yellowhammer Gap. Section 18e is cleared for hikers, but due to road construction on the back side of the Tapoco property the area is very muddy and there is a sign (post still there) missing at a crucial turn of the BMT behind the maintenance area.

Our crew consisting of Rick Harris, Joe Cantwell, Steve Dennison and Keith Mertz on Section 19a completed the brushing and lopping of the entire section and no blowdowns were found. Section 19a is cleared for hikers, but note the steps on the southernmost end of the section need repair and replacement. This 2026 project will need approximately 30 additional 6x6's 24" to 36" long and associated rebar and screws.

Barry Allen, Bob Cowdrick and Patrick Ward were the composition of our third crew on Section 19b clearing 13 blowdowns. Section 19b is cleared for hikers but there are several steep areas that could use some steps installed. Another 2026 project to be planned and executed.

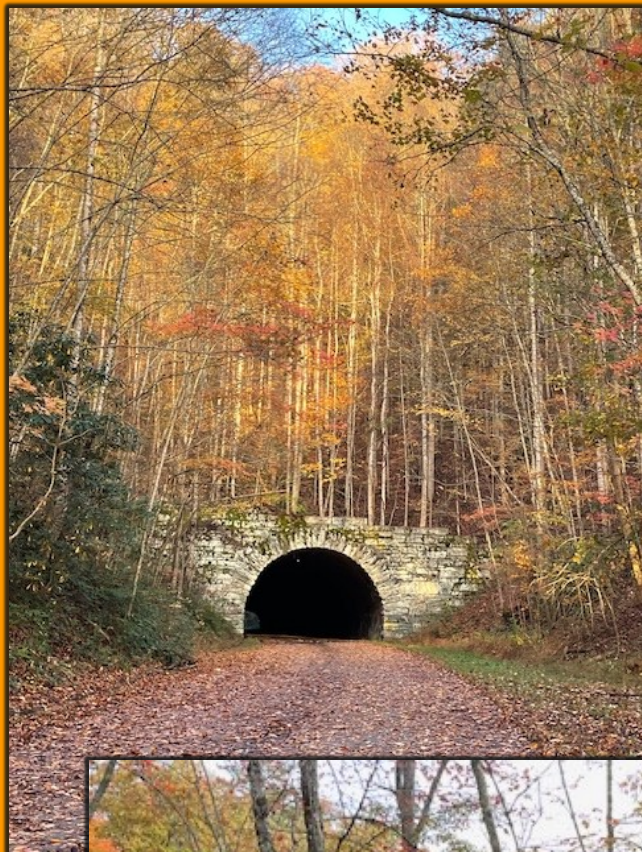
As you can see here, all three of these sections are cleared and ready for hiking...AND they are in need of future attention! At the end of the workday most of the folks were able to gather back at Tapoco Lodge and enjoy more fellowship around the table whilst partaking in a very kind gesture from the staff...Tapoco Lodge "comped" our snacks and meals.... what a treat! With deep gratitude - Patrick



Tapoco Lodge is always a treat after a hard maintenance day!

Hike Fest - Tunnel Bypass Trail

Photos courtesy of Steve Pruett and Kathy Williams



Hike Fest - The Enormity of Joyce Kilmer

Photos courtesy of Rick Harris

Rob Herman, Brenda Harris and Adri Herman dwarfed by the forest!



Resolve to Start the New Year by Becoming a Section Maintainer

If you are looking for way to make your life more meaningful and fulfilling in the new year, think about adopting and maintaining a section of the BMT. Time in the forest nourishes you and gives you so much more than you give. To learn about becoming a Section Maintainer click [HERE](#). For more information on what sections are available click [HERE](#).



Sections 16b and d are available for adoption.



Sections 18a, b, c and d are available for adoption.

More from the BMTA Annual Meeting!



Steve Hayden presents Daphne Martin with her Trail Worker of the Year Award.



Clare Sullivan and Ken Cissna with Patrick Ward's Idiosyncrasy Award. Photo courtesy of Brenda Harris.



Veterans Trivia Winners!! Photo courtesy of Brenda Harris.

Hike Fest - Lakeshore Trail

Photo courtesy of Jes Morgan



BMTA PARTNERSHIPS

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

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

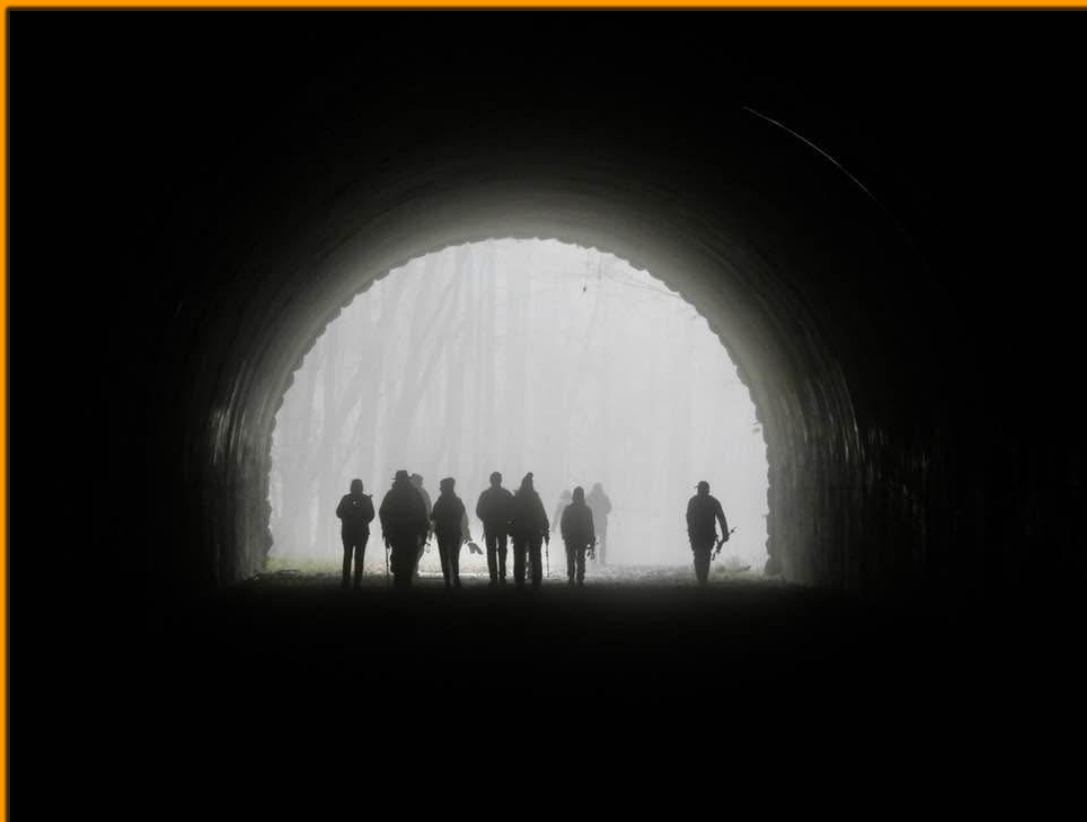
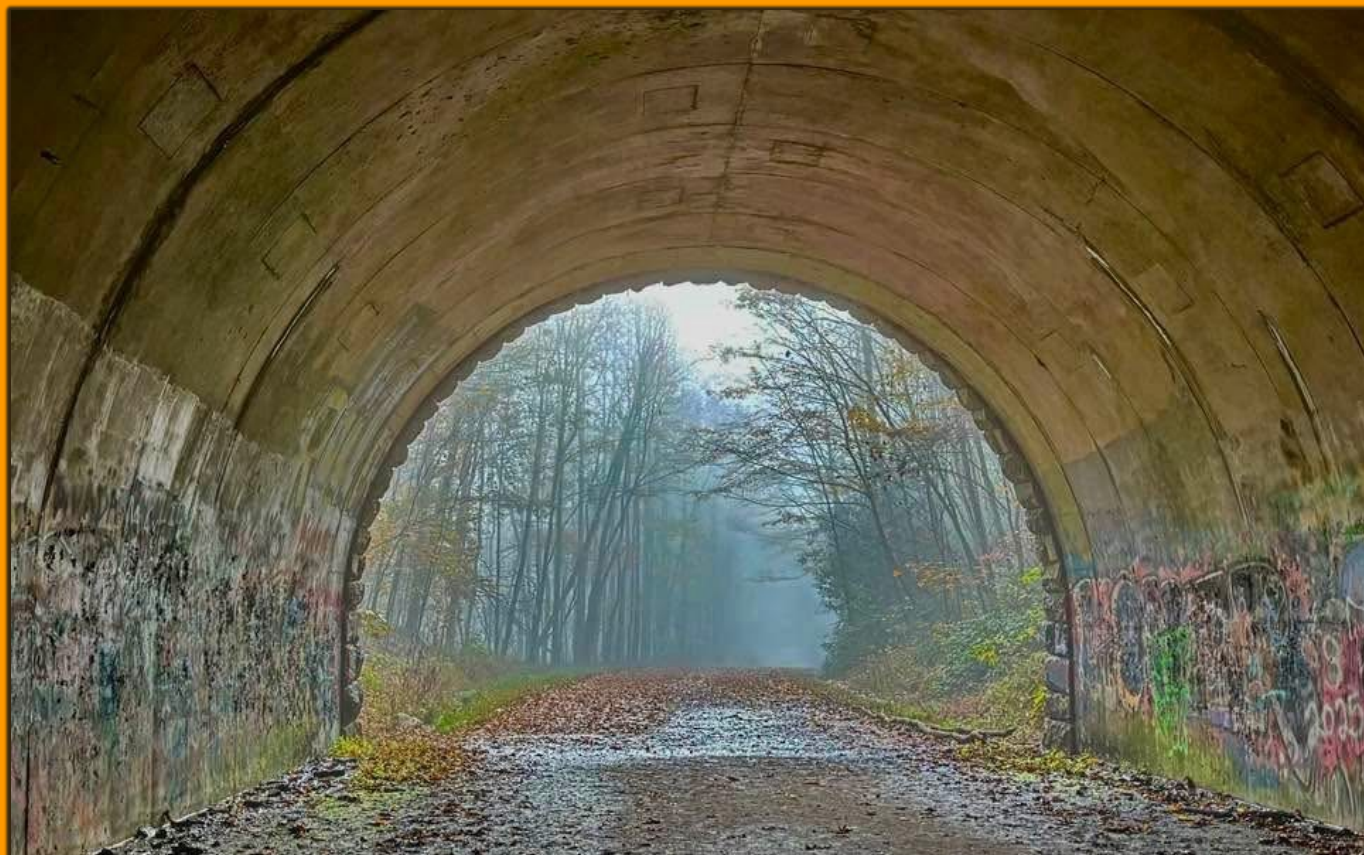
Go to [Partnerships](#) to view the details.

Employer Identification #58-1428009.

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

Hike Fest-The Tunnel to Nowhere

Courtesy of Suzy Dowling



George Requests Your “George Stories”

by Kathy Williams and David Watkins

George Owen is working with BMTAer David Watkins on a book about George’s adventures and misadventures in the wild world of the outdoors. He is asking for personal recollections from those of you who would be willing to share them in his book.

For instance, one of mine with George taught me how to remember names of things. I had asked George to lead a hike on the BMTA/AT Loop on Springer Mountain for my daughter’s retreat group. She had been looking for an outdoor experience, and I knew that George could not only guide the group but give a history of the two trails. It was a way for the group to go home bragging about being on both the AT and the BMT as well as meeting George, who had been so instrumental in the BMT’s construction. He readily answered questions about many of the flora and fauna until one stumped him. He said, “Let me walk on it and it will come to me.” Not ten minutes later he burst out, “Ex-lax, it rhymes with ex-lax!” This is how I learned to remember the name of the galax plant!!

David is soliciting things you remember about or how George influenced or made an impression on you. Maybe it was on a hike, a work trip or in one of his Young Harris classes. Have you ever rounded a trail curve and wow, I wasn't expecting to see that? Could have been something beautiful or maybe something that really shouldn't be there. George has seen both. You met someone interesting or unexpected on a hike? George has. Or have you run into a long-lost acquaintance or someone you had something in common with? George has. You did something dumb? George has several times.

You can remain anonymous in the publication. Send your story and phone number to David Watkins at dwatkins@bmta.org.



George as a tree-hugger!

BMTA to the Len Foote Hike Inn for Half-Price

by Clare Sullivan

The beautiful Len Foote Hike Inn has reserved rooms for BMTA members on Monday, February 23, 2026. All rooms will be half-price. Members can call 706-344-1547, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM-2:30 PM, to make a reservation. You cannot reserve online. Let them know you want a room transferred from Clare Sullivan's name to your name. **The deadline for reserving is Monday, February 16.**

The cost for two hikers is \$124.70, which includes dinner and breakfast. One person in a room is \$92.80. These prices include taxes. While there, you can enjoy a history and tour of the inn at 5:00 PM. Following dinner, there will be an interesting, optional presentation. The Inn holds a Platinum Level Leed Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The scenic moderate 5-mile hike gradually goes uphill. The rooms are heated and have electricity. You receive a cloth bag with sheets and a towel at check-in. Extra-long bunk beds are in each room. The meals include fresh food. The bathhouse is just steps from your room and has hot showers. Lights line the covered walkway to the bathhouse. Puzzles, books, games and a few guitars are available in the lovely sunroom. Relaxing chairs are on the deck.

Rick and Brenda Harris will be giving a presentation on "Paddling the Boundary Waters" about a canoe paddling trip in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota.

Feel free to visit the Len Foote Hike Inn website at [The Hike Inn](#). If you'd like to hike to the Hike Inn with others, meet at the Amicalola Visitors Center at 10:00 a.m.



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

Remember that it is always colder at the top of the mountain!

Do not underestimate this danger.

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.

Thank You to all of Our Raffle Sponsors!



Jess Morgan with her yummy winnings!



Patrick and Cindy Ward have installed their barn quilt winnings!



Make It a Benton MacKaye Christmas with a Gift from the BMTA Trail Store



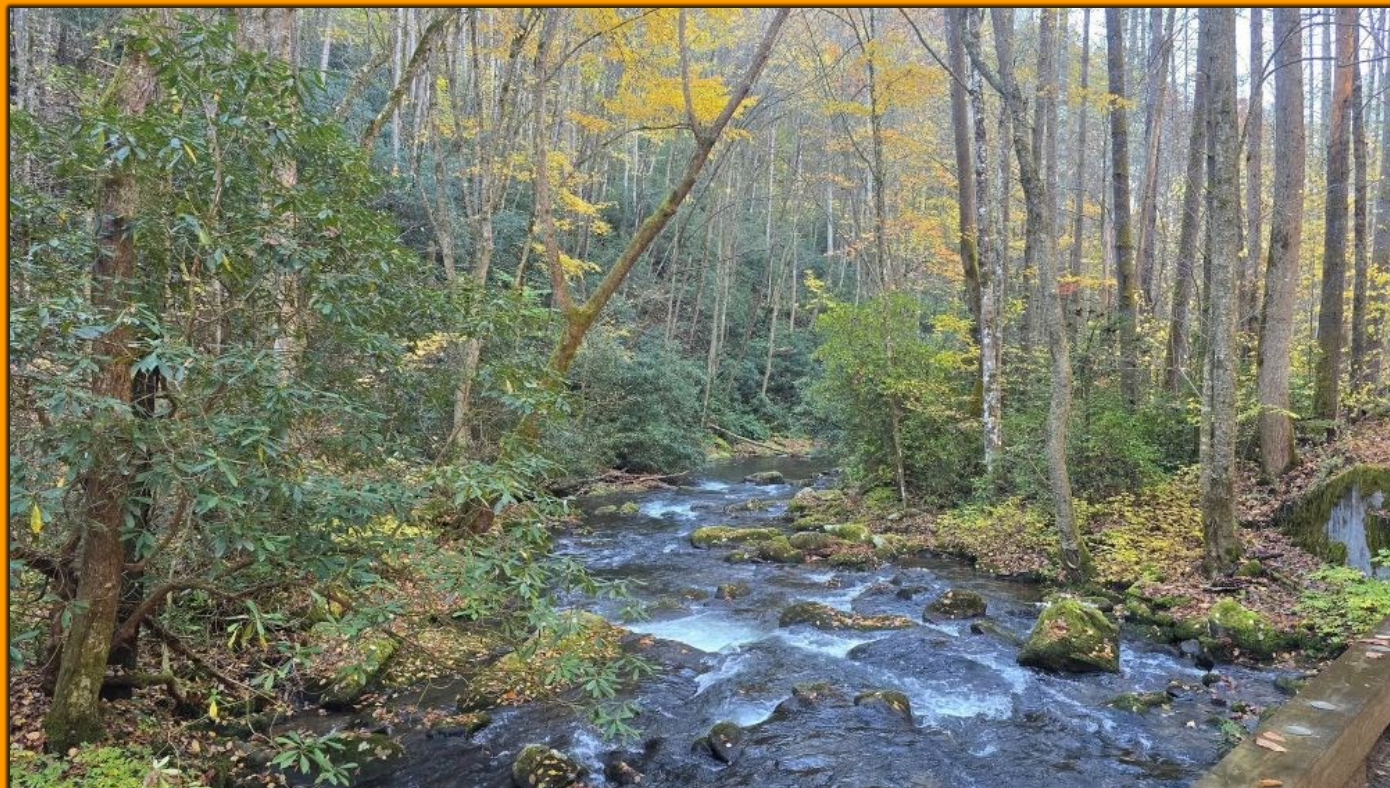
Shop the [Trail Store](#) Now!

Hike Fest - Noland Creek Trail

Photos courtesy of Brenda Harris



Do we turn around or just keep going? Why keep going of course!



Hike Fest - Lonesome Pine Overlook

Photos courtesy of Brenda Harris



Nothing short of spectacular!!





Mr Bones went Christmas shopping at the BMTA Store. In addition to Trail Guides for Snoopy and Woodstock he bought each of them a BMTA [membership!](#)

Merry Christmas everyone!

[TRAIL STORE](#)

Upcoming

by Ray Laws, Hiking Director

December

December 8 (Monday) Wagon Train Trail. Moderate, mostly flat or downhill, from Brasstown Bald to Young Harris College. Hike of 6.6 miles with a shuttle between Brasstown Bald's parking lot and Young Harris College's parking lot. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.



December 13 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip.

Section 2 -- Three Forks >> Swinging Bridge

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

December 17 (Wednesday) Three Forks. Moderate 5-mile hike on the AT and the BMT where they join together. Start on FS Rd. 58 with a side trip to the waterfall on Long Creek and Cemetery Pavilion at Hickory Flats and return. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

December 19 (Friday) Fightingtown Creek #3. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 4 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



December 27 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. Section 17a – Tellico River Road » Mangan Branch & 17b – Mangan Branch » FS 61B

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

January

January 1 (Thursday) BMT/AT Upper Loop at Springer Mountain. Bring in New Year's Day with a great hike to an iconic mountain! DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). 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. Moderate hike of about 5 miles. The 1st mile and a half is uphill. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

January 9 (Friday) BMT: Three Forks to No Name Bald and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4.7 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



January 10 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

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

January 12 (Monday) Dyer Gap to Flat Top to Double Hog Gap and return. Mainly moderate 8 miles with some strenuous sections. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at sdennison@bmta.org.

January 16 (Friday) Hooper Bald / Huckleberry Knob. Meet at the Cherochala Skyway Visitor Center, 10 AM. Bring cold weather gear, lunch, water. **THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC.** Your dog must be leashed. We are hoping for snow to make this a memorable hike. The round trip to Hooper Bald (5440' high) is 2 miles and the round trip to Huckleberry Knob (5540' high) is 1.8 miles. Afterwards, when we return to Tellico Plains, we can gather for supper and beverages at one of the local restaurants, perhaps the Peach Street Grill and the Tellico Brewing Company for some great cuisine and a local brew. If the weather is the wrong type of nasty (cold rain instead of snow), our rain date will be Friday, January 23. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org.

January 19 (Monday) Thunder Rock Express to BMT back to Thunder Rock Campground in the Ocoee area of Tennessee. Moderate 5 miles with some steep downhill. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.



Ocoee River in winter by Thunder Rock



January 24 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA
Contact:
BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

January 26 (Monday) Wilscot Gap to Old Dial Road and return. Strenuous 11.5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at sdennison@bmta.org.

January 28 (Wednesday) Coker Creek Falls to the BMT. Coker Creek Falls is a series of cascading waterfalls from 5 to 45 feet, located in Polk County, Tennessee. We'll hike by the Falls 3 miles down the trail to the BMT big bridge and back. Moderate 6 miles. Contact Hike Leaders Ed and Clare Sullivan at csullivan@bmta.org.

February

February 2 (Monday) Trails of Jack Rabbit in Hayesville, North Carolina. Moderate 5-mile hike by Lake Chatuge. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

February 9 (Monday) BMT: Bushy Head Gap thru Hudson Gap to McKinney Gap and return. Moderately/strenuous 8.2 miles. 1.5 miles Hudson Gap to McKinney Gap. Contact Hike Leader Steve Dennison at sdennison@bmta.org.



February 14 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

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

February 16 (Monday) Unicoi to Helen and back. Start at the Unicoi State Park Lodge and hike into Helen and return. Moderate 6-mile hike with optional lunch in Helen after hike.

Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

February 16 (Monday) Boyd's Gap to Thunder Rock. This is mostly downhill approximately 6 miles. Meet at Piggly Wiggly in Ducktown by 9:00 AM. Contact Hike Leader Tim Swan by texting questions at 760-617-5580 and include your name.

February 20 (Friday) Bald River Falls in the winter. Meet at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 10 AM. Bring cold weather gear, lunch, water. **THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC.** Your dog must be leashed. We are hoping for a frozen waterfall or lots of water crashing over the several falls. This 4.5-mile loop hike will start at the Baby Falls Picnic Area. We will go up the road to the Cow Camp Trailhead, then up the ridge on this trail then downhill to the Bald River Trail. We will then turn left (upstream) and go to the Pawpaw Branch Crossing. From there, we will return downstream along the Bald River Trail to River Road past several incredible waterfalls, ending, of course, at the iconic Bald River Falls by the road. We will then walk along the road upstream to Baby Falls and our vehicles. Afterwards, we can dine at a local Tellico Plains restaurant, maybe Mexican food at one of the two Mexican restaurants, enjoying margheritas and authentic Mexican food. If the weather is terrible on Feb 20, we will reschedule the hike to Feb 27.

Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org



February 21 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

February 23 (Monday) BMTA at the Hike Inn. The scenic moderate 5-mile hike gradually goes uphill. We will spend the night at the Len Foote Hike Inn and return the next day. If you'd like to hike to the Hike Inn with others, meet at the Amicalola Visitors Center at 10:00 AM. See [page 17](#) for complete details.

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

**The deadline for the January Newsletter is Wednesday, December 31.
Thank you!**

[MEMBERSHIP](#)

[DONATE](#)

[DONATE LAF](#)

[PARTNERSHIPS](#)

[TRAIL STORE](#)