



JUN 9, 2023 : [DIANE DUFFARD](#)[NEWS](#)

New Bill Would Make Benton Mackaye Trail a National Scenic Trail

In May 2023, Congressman Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) introduced the Benton MacKaye Scenic Trail Act: a bipartisan [House bill](#) that would designate the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) as the nation's twelfth National Scenic Trail. The bill is co-sponsored by representatives from Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee—the three states through which the trail passes.



Photo: [Sara Leibold](#)

National Scenic Trails

According to the National Park Service, “National Scenic Trails are 100 miles or longer, continuous, primarily non-motorized routes of outstanding recreation opportunity.”

The [Benton MacKaye Trail Association](#) (BMTA) adds that “the prestigious designation is reserved for trails that epitomize the stunning, natural beauty of America’s wide array of natural landscapes.”

The National Scenic Trail designation was established by the National Trails System Act of 1968, which [promotes](#) the enjoyment and appreciation of trails while encouraging greater public access.

The Appalachian and Pacific Crest trails were the first to receive National Scenic Trail status in 1968, and the most recent additions include the Pacific Northwest, Arizona, and New England trails in 2009. Details about each of the 11 trails can be found on the National Park Service [website](#).

READ NEXT – [Q&A: Arlette “Apple Pie” Laan on Becoming the First Woman To Hike All 11 National Scenic Trails](#)



Photo: [Sara Leibold](#)

Benton MacKaye Trail

Winding nearly 300 miles through the southern Appalachian Mountains, the BMT shares its southern terminus with the Appalachian Trail at Springer Mountain and provides scenic beauty throughout the year with an abundance of spring wildflowers, stunning fall foliage, and panoramic winter views. It passes through six wilderness areas and three national forests. Ninety-three miles of the trail lie in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, making it the longest trail in the Smokies.

Inspired by [Benton MacKaye's](#) proposals for spur trails that would extend the Appalachian Trail further south, Dave Sherman, the founder of the BMTA, initially had the idea for the BMT in 1975. Thirty years later, the trail was officially completed. Known for its beauty and seclusion, the trail is popular with hikers of all kinds.

READ NEXT – [How To Hike the Benton Mackaye Trail](#)



Photo: [Sara Leibold](#)

Effects of the Bill

As explained by the BMTA, “The National Scenic Trail designation would enhance BMTA’s ability to preserve the timeless beauty of the trail’s corridor,” providing more resources from the Forest Service and National Park Service to help protect and maintain the trail. It would also enhance recreational travel to the area and provide support for the local economy.

More information can be found on the BMTA’s website, which includes a [page](#) sharing updates and ways to get involved.

Featured Photo: [Emma Slaughter](#)

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