



Contributed photo

Members of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association along with representatives of the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Forest Service re-opened a section of the trail to Fall Branch Falls with a ribbon cutting Saturday, September 22. Taking part in the event were, from left, front, Darcy Douglas, Fannin County Chamber of Commerce President Jan Hackett, U.S. Forest Service representative John Stephens and Benton MacKaye Trail Association Georgia Maintenance Director Barry Allen; back David Blount, Phil Guhl, Tom Keene, Towdy Tipton of the U.S. Forest Service and George Owen.

## Fall Branch Falls trail re-opened with ceremony

BY DUB JOINER  
[dub@thenewsobserver.com](mailto:dub@thenewsobserver.com)

The reroute of the trail to Fall Branch Falls was reopened Saturday, September 22, with a ribbon cutting on the 25th anniversary of National Public Lands Day.

Years of foot traffic had taken its toll on the popular trail to the falls, eroding much of it into deep crevices and leaving trip hazards in the form of large roots and exposed rock.

The decision to create a reroute was made in late 2013 and work began on Valentine's Day 2015.

Benton MacKaye Trail Maintenance Director Barry Allen said volunteers put in 1,480 man hours battling roots and stumps on a steep hillside.

"Four-man teams lugged 40 six-by-six timbers uphill to be used for cribbing to stabilize the trail in steep areas as well as for the 37 steps connecting the half-mile reroute with the old

trail," he said.

The Fall Branch Falls rerouted section of trail is part of the larger, 300-mile long Benton MacKaye Trail that begins on Springer Mountain in Georgia and ends at Davenport Gap in the Smokies.

Taking part in the reopening of the trail, in addition to Allen, were Jan Hackett, president of the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce, and John Stephens of the U.S. Forest Service.