

# BMTA members awarded

BENTON MacKAYE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) held its annual meeting Nov. 3 at Coker Creek Lodge in Tennessee.

A "state of the trail" report showed that trail maintainers turned in a record 5,079 work hours, 63 maintainers had 30 hours or more and 21 maintainers had put in over 100 hours maintaining the trail.

Larry Dumas, of Mineral Bluff, was given the prestigious BMTA Maintainer of the Year Award. An avid hiker, Dumas thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 1978. Dumas and his wife, Joyce, moved to their favorite vacation spot, Mineral Bluff, in 1999.

"If this is a good place to come on vacation, it's a good place to retire to," he said.

Dumas' favorite trail pastime is sitting down and talking with day hikers and thru-hikers. A regular participant on the twice-a-month BMTA work trips,



Above, Larry Dumas, left, accepts the Benton MacKaye Trail Association Maintainer of the Year Award from Georgia Trail Maintenance Director Barry Allen. Joy Forehand, left, accepts the BMTA Volunteer of the Year Award from association president Tom Keene.

he adopted his own section of the Benton MacKaye Trail, from Brawley Mountain to Dial Road, to maintain.

Dumas said, "the toughest challenge of maintaining my section is a mile-long patch of weeds that, in the spring, grows 5-6 feet tall in a six-week pe-

riod. I have to go in with a weedeater to keep the trail open."

Joy Forehand, of Blue Ridge, received the BMTA Volunteer of the Year Award.

When Forehand and her husband moved to Georgia in 2011, the BMTA hiking program first drew the couple to the association.

"When you're new to the area, it's great to have someone leading you on a hike. You won't get lost trying to find the trailhead and you get to try hikes you may otherwise not have known about," said Forehand.

A former magazine editor and office manager, as well as a horse show architect and manager, Forehand's office and planning skills were soon put to work for the BMTA.

She's been secretary of the association for five years and, at this year's meeting, she was elected vice president. Forehand's favorite activities revolve around hiking and maintaining a section of the Benton MacKaye Trail in the Aska Adventure Area she and her husband adopted.

"Whether hiking or maintaining the trail, there's no better place to be than in the woods," Forehand said.

Volunteers with the association constructed and now maintain the 300-mile long Benton MacKaye Trail that begins on Springer Mountain in Georgia and ends at Davenport Gap in the Smokies.