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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R.

To amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. COHEN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Benton MacKaye Na-
5 tional Scenic Trail Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that the Benton MacKaye Trail—

1 (1) is a scenic, nonmotorized trail that traverses
2 approximately 287 miles over some of the most re-
3 nowned forests and mountains in the States of Geor-
4 gia, Tennessee, and North Carolina;

5 (2) showcases a wide variety of scenic views, in-
6 cluding high elevation peaks, mature forests, and se-
7 cluded waterfalls, and passes through wilderness rich
8 with biodiversity;

9 (3) passes through six designated Wilderness
10 Areas, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,
11 and the Chattahoochee, Cherokee, and Nantahala
12 National Forests;

13 (4) provides a wide array of easily accessible
14 hikes for novice and intermediate hikers, as well as
15 more challenging trails for backpacking;

16 (5) supports economic opportunities for numer-
17 ous rural communities that benefit from the trail's
18 visitors spending their money on accommodations,
19 food, and outdoor supplies;

20 (6) runs from Springer Mountain in Georgia,
21 through Tennessee, and extends through the Great
22 Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina;
23 and

24 (7) is physically accessible and can be main-
25 tained at a minimal cost because—

1 (A) the Benton MacKaye Trail has been
2 maintained at its current length since 2005;

3 (B) 95 percent of the Benton MacKaye
4 Trail is located on Federal land; and

5 (C) the Benton MacKaye Trail has been
6 successfully constructed, maintained, and man-
7 aged by the Benton MacKaye Trail Association
8 since 1980.

9 **SEC. 3. BENTON MACKAYE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL.**

10 Section 5(a) of the National Trails System Act (16
11 U.S.C. 1244(a)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
12 lowing:

13 “(32) BENTON MACKAYE NATIONAL SCENIC
14 TRAIL.—

15 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Benton MacKaye
16 National Scenic Trail, a trail extending approxi-
17 mately 287 miles across the States of Georgia,
18 Tennessee, and North Carolina, as generally de-
19 picted on the map entitled ‘Benton MacKaye
20 Trail Overview Map’, dated January 6, 2022.

21 “(B) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—The map
22 described in subparagraph (A) shall be on file
23 and available for public inspection in the appro-
24 priate offices of the Forest Service and the Na-
25 tional Park Service.

1 “(C) AUTHORIZED USES.—

2 “(i) EXISTING USES.—Existing non-
3 motorized recreational activities (where au-
4 thorized on the day before the date of the
5 enactment of the Benton MacKaye Na-
6 tional Scenic Trail Act of 2023, including
7 equestrian, non-motorized bicycling, and
8 special uses) are authorized on the trail.

9 “(ii) REQUIRED COMPREHENSIVE
10 PLAN.—The comprehensive plan required
11 under subsection (e) shall address author-
12 ized uses and management of the rec-
13 reational, scenic, and other values for
14 which the trail is established.

15 “(D) ADMINISTRATION.—The Benton
16 MacKaye National Scenic Trail shall be admin-
17 istered by the Secretary of Agriculture, acting
18 through the Chief of the Forest Service, in con-
19 sultation with—

20 “(i) other Federal agencies;

21 “(ii) State, Tribal, regional, and local
22 agencies; and

23 “(iii) nonprofit organizations and
24 other mutually beneficial cooperators.”.